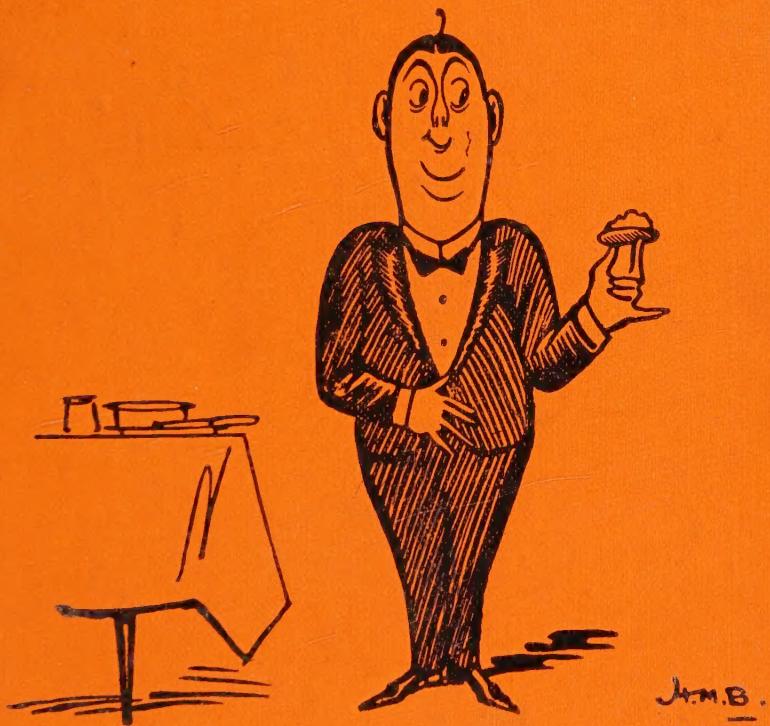


THE COMPLETE LIMERICK BOOK

LANGFORD REED

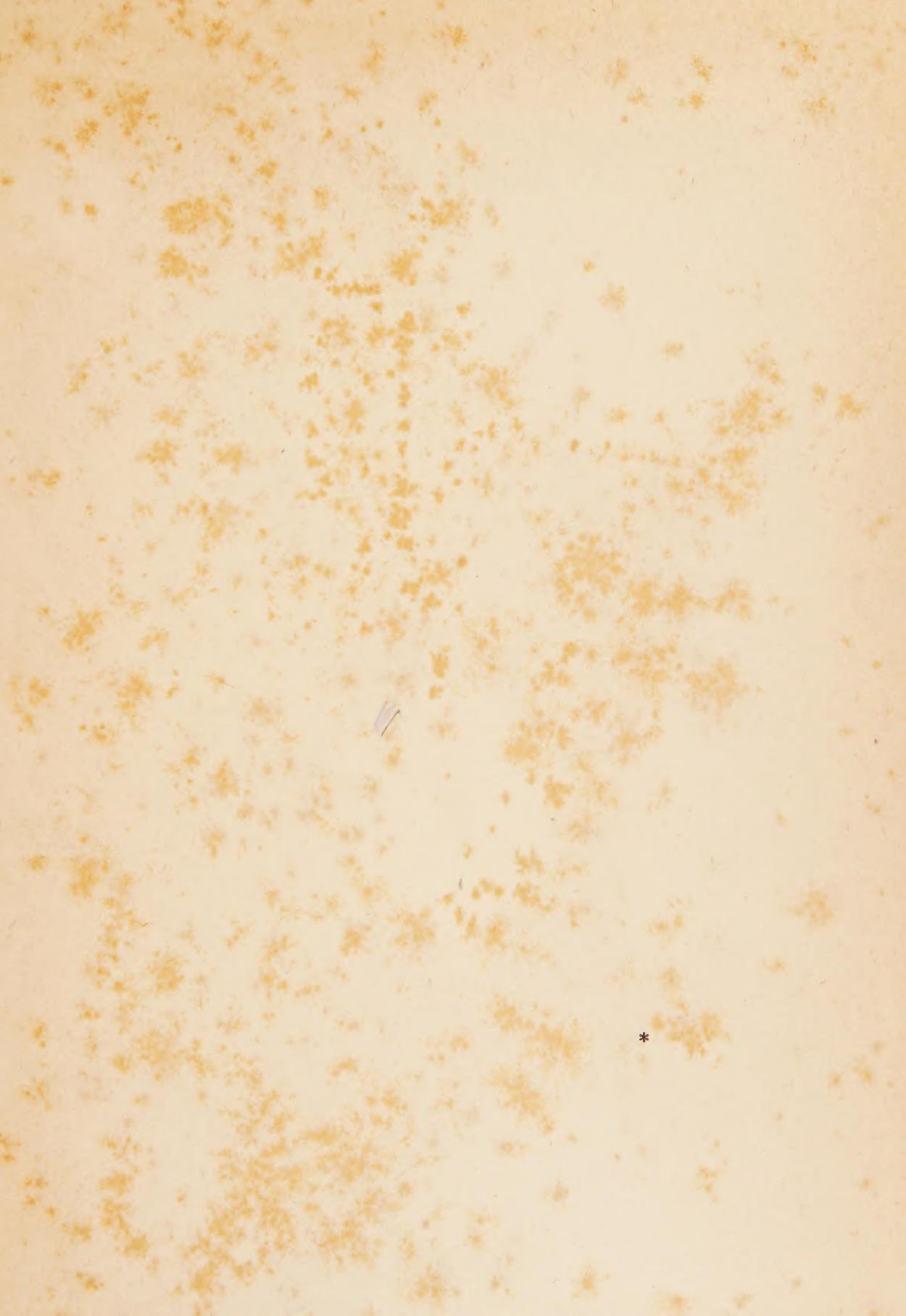


Illustrated by
H. M. BATEMAN



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*THE COMPLETE
LIMERICK BOOK*

THE COMPLETE LIMERICK BOOK

*The Origin, History and Achievements of the
Limerick, with nearly 600 Selected Examples*

By
LANGFORD REED

With 24 Illustrations by
H. M. BATEMAN



**JARROLD'S Publishers LONDON
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DEDICATION

THIS book is dedicated to the picturesque and ancient city of Limerick, of which Thackeray, in his " Irish Sketch Book," writes:—"I doubt very much whether I have anything to say about Limerick that is worth saying, or reading," and forthwith proceeds to describe and " analyse " it at considerable length.

But, keen observer as he was, he missed a great opportunity —that of being the first novelist to identify the city with a fascinating form of metrical frivolity which, before his death, had been established for some twenty years, thanks principally to Edward Lear.

With incredible perverseness his omission has been followed by the compilers of our national works of reference. For example, in " The Encyclopædia Britannica," although we find much interesting and useful information about Limerick, there is never a word concerning the city's right to be acknowledged as the " birthplace " of one of our most popular national recreations! Is it too much to hope that in the next edition of this Brobdingnagian work this lamentable lacuna will be rectified?

And what about the original Limerickist?

I feel that Mr. George A. Birmingham cannot altogether be absolved from censure for failing to " discover " and acclaim this real Hibernian hero, instead of the delightful but dubious General John Regan. Had he done so, one can imagine the annual pilgrimage of ardent and inveterate devotees to the hallowed spot where he was born, and the Limerickal odes they would have declaimed in honour of this great benefactor of humanity who, assuredly, merits a memorial statue far more than some of the inglorious and stodgy nonentities whose effigies cumber the thoroughfares of the metropolis to-day.

Dedication

Alas ! All records of him have been lost,* and his name, therefore, must inevitably remain as unknown and obscure as the names of those other sublime benefactors who invented apple puddings, mixed bathing, and soft collars.

L. R.

21, CHRISTCHURCH ROAD,
HAMPSTEAD, LONDON.

December, 1924.



* NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.—Since the above was written it would seem that my identification of the great man (so far as Great Britain is concerned) as Thomas Moore has solved the mystery.

December, 1926.

L. R.

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PREAMBLE

There was a young fellow named Reed,
Who said, " There's a need—a great need
For a Limerick Book."
So he made one, and look !
Here's the book that he made—now proceed.

There was a young man with a pen,
Who has used it agen and agen
To embellish this book,
Which he hopes will be took
As a standard edition. Amen.

THE COMPLETE LIMERICK BOOK

INTRODUCTION

THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE

THIS book has been compiled with two principal objects in view. The first is the obvious one of collecting and classifying as many "worthy" Limericks as it has been possible to obtain ; and the second and more important, to clear the character of the Limerick from the suspicion and odium which appear to have been cast upon it by prejudice and ignorance, and to present it in its true light as an innocent and legitimate branch of that department of poetics so ably presided over by the mirthful Muse, Thalia.

The author cannot more effectively describe this prejudice than by quoting from correspondence he received from three well-known men of letters, when engaged in compiling this book. Their opinions offer striking tribute to the necessity for the publication of such a work, the first of its kind, as a diligent search at the British Museum has proved.

Writes Mr. Bernard Shaw :—"There are several personal Limericks by D. G. Rossetti, and some by Swinburne, which became known in their generation, but like the large number of geographical Limericks which preceded them they are mostly unfit for publication. They must be left for oral tradition, but it may be that, in the course of time, sufficient Limericks which shall be decent as well as witty or ingenious may accumulate.

At present, Edward Lear's 'Book of Nonsense' is the only collection which any reputable publisher or printer could touch."

This is hardly correct, for in the single-volume edition of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's works, published by the firm of Ellis, in 1911, there are twenty-four Limericks. On the whole they are surprisingly poor, for a poet of the calibre of Rossetti. A selection of them will be found in Chapter II. Other reputable publishers have issued volumes of Limericks by Messrs. Cosmo Monkhouse, Walter Parke, and Randall Davies.

Mr. Bernard Shaw's derogatory estimation of Limericks, generally, is endorsed by Mr. Arnold Bennett, who writes:—"In reply to your letter, all I have to say about Limericks is that the best ones are entirely unprintable," and by Mr. Arthur Wimperis, whose letter states that:—"The only Limericks in my experience of any literary merit are distinctly Rabelaisian. Beside these, the more polite and printable examples fade away into the dim haze of mediocrity."

The author ventures to hope that the many scores of felicitous and ingenious examples of real literary merit he has been able to quote in the anthological sections of this aspiring work, including an admirable specimen by Mr. Arnold Bennett himself, will succeed in "deodorizing" the character of the Limerick in the opinion of these distinguished detractors and prove to them what their own works have proved to the public, viz.—that literary waggishness and obscenity are not necessarily dependent on one another.

Incidentally, since their experience of Limerick humour appears to have been of so regrettable a nature, the perpetrator of this work is glad to have the privilege of providing them with examples which they *can* retail in public without dislocating the amenities of polite society. On this point it will be of interest to quote the first part of a letter which he received from

a distinguished American gentleman, Mr. Irwin Laughlin, U.S. Minister to Greece, soon after the publication of the first British edition :

“ AMERICAN LEGATION,
“ ATHENS,
“ 6th January, 1925.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Your book of Limericks is delightful, and I beg you to accept the compliments of one quite unknown to you who is appreciating and enjoying it.

“ I have long wondered why no one had undertaken a collection of this sort, for the prejudice of which you speak in your introduction is, in fact, undeserved. Since my childhood I have been addicted to Limericks, and by far the greater number of the hundreds I have encountered have been entirely fit for the drawing-room—and even for the nursery.”

An original Limerick by Mr. Laughlin is given on page 86.

Another eminent gentleman whom the author hopes to “convert,” with Messrs. Shaw, Bennett, and Wimperis, is Commissioner Booth-Tucker of the Salvation Army. In answer to an earnest request for a Limerick contribution, he replied :—

“ I appreciate very much your kind suggestion, but you will see from the enclosed that Limericks are not at all in my line.” The “enclosed” was a tract entitled, “Six-Six-Six—the Mark of the Beast !”

It looks, rather, as if the admirable Commissioner had, by a remarkable coincidence, also received a communication from Mr. Bernard Shaw upon the subject of Limericks, akin to the one already quoted, for he appears to entertain very similar views as to their general character. Not that his interesting pamphlet states as much, directly, for its interpretation of “The

Mark of the Beast " is that it is caused by " the modern gods whose brand Satan has placed upon the Right Hand and Fore-head of Man, which may be summarized as follows :—Sport ; including golf, football and tennis ; Gambling, Drink, Cinemas, Dress, and Money Madness."

Sir Thomas Barlow, the King's Physician, wrote in much more encouraging strain, thus :—" I am glad you are taking up the subject of Limericks. I have no capacity in that direction, but I quite realize that it has a distinct feature of its own and is worthy of being investigated and put on record. So I heartily wish you good luck ! "

Sir Arthur Pinero confessed :—" I have never composed a Limerick or succeeded in carrying one in my head, so I am unable to have the pleasure of contributing to what I hope will prove a very successful book."

Mr. Alfred Sutro, Mr. W. W. Jacobs, Sir Landon Ronald, Major-General Sir Francis Younghusband and Lord Aberconway wrote very much to the same effect, the last-named stating :—" Though I am a smatterer in a good many things I have never embarked in Limericks."

The compiler of this work desires to express his gratitude to the very many enthusiastic and talented Limerick lovers who have sent him contributions, in many cases originals, among whom are Dean Inge, Dean Welldon, the Rev. B. C. Bourchier, Father Ronald Knox, Rt. Hon. Sir Gilbert Parker, P.C., Mr. Arnold Bennett, The Earl of Dartmouth, The Earl of Selborne, Lord Phillimore, Mr. Irwin Laughlin, U.S. Minister at Athens ; Mr. John Galsworthy, Professor Irvine Masson, Sir George Henschel, Mr. Gelett Burgess, Mr. Arthur Guiterman, Mr. Louis Untermeyer, Mr. Coulson Kernahan and his clever sister, Mrs. Charles Harris, Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, Major Ian Hay, Mr. Gordon Selfridge, and other well-known people.

He wishes also to thank his friends, Mr. George Curnock, late

editor of "The Referee," and Mr. Leonard Crocombe, editor of "Tit Bits," for their kind assistance in enabling him to extract from the back numbers of those journals a collection of admirable Limericks, without which this book could not make legitimate claim to its title. Thanks are also due to Sir Owen Seaman, editor of "Punch," and Mr. Lincoln Springfield, late editor of "London Opinion," for the same courtesy. Indeed the whole Press of Great Britain and the United States have been most kind. More than thirty columns of flattering reviews of the first edition appeared in the British Press, and the total of those in the American papers was almost as extensive. Several of the improvements in this second edition were suggested by the writers of these critiques, notably by Mr. J. C. Squire of the "Observer," Mr. E. B. Osborn of the "Morning Post," and Mr. R. Ellis Roberts of "The Guardian."

In the endeavour to make this work worthy of its comprehensive title, the author has examined several thousand Limericks from which he has excluded a large number of "Rabelaisian" examples and, he hopes, every weak and unworthy specimen.

He has also rejected several geographical examples which won prizes in newspaper competitions, for the reason that they were based on purely imaginary places. This is an old artifice in Limerick-making, but an unworthy one, for it reduces the problem of composition to the inventing of two rhyming lines instead of three, since the name of any imaginary place can be mechanically introduced to suit the two legitimate rhymes.

In every case in this work where it has been possible to trace the author, appropriate acknowledgment has been made. If any examples of Limerick art which should have been included have been omitted—and it seems a vain hope to expect complete immunity in this respect—the compiler will gladly include them in any future edition of this work if the authors, or other

authoritative informants, will be kind enough to send him copies of them.

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY

Since the first edition of this book appeared, its compiler believes that he has been fortunate enough to elucidate a literary mystery which has puzzled the world for a good many years—that concerning the origin of the Limerick.

Writers on both sides of the Atlantic have hazarded all manner of desperate suppositions, which they have been unable to substantiate by any evidence whatever, and even that weighty repository of knowledge, "The Encyclopædia Britannica," is unable to give any opinion more illuminating than one to the effect that the Limerick is "a name which has been adopted to distinguish a certain form of verse which began to be cultivated in the middle of the nineteenth century. A Limerick is a kind of burlesque epigram written in five lines. There is much uncertainty as to the meaning of the name and as to the time when it became attached to a particular species of nonsense verses."

It is probable that most people who have given any thought to the origin of this fascinating by-way of literature would feel convinced that the oldest example extant is the famous "Old Man of Tobago" (see Chapter XVIII), mentioned by Dickens in the second chapter of "Our Mutual Friend," and acknowledged by Lear as the rhyme which served as a model for the verses in "The Book of Nonsense." With five others it occurs in "The Rhymes of Mother Goose," and all of them are undoubtedly very much "pre-Lear."

Two of them, in the opinion of the present writer, share the distinction of being the oldest Limericks in existence, in present-day style, for they are included in James Orchard Halliwell's classic work, "The Nursery Rhymes of England"

(1842), in which he says in the preface, with reference to the verses in his anthology, generally : " We can ascertain that they have been current in the nurseries for nearly two centuries," which, in these days, would make them about 270 years old ! The Limericks in question are " The Old Woman of Norwich " and " The Old Woman of Leeds." (See page 140.)

These rhymes, then, are the " seed " from which all the vast growth of modern Limericks has sprung, and if we could only identify their author we should almost certainly discover the original Limerickist—at least so far as Great Britain is concerned.

We have now established the fact that the Limerick—or rather that form of verse to which this entitlement was applied later—existed in this country in Charles the Second's time, but we have yet to solve the mystery of why it was so called, and whether it was known elsewhere before reaching our shores.

For some time past the author has had a strong suspicion, amounting almost to a certainty, that the Limerick, in its original form, must have been of a religious order. The fact that he had discovered that " The Church " is not only responsible for perpetrating more Limericks than all the other professions put together, but that a large proportion of Limericks, in general, suggests a clerical atmosphere, both in respect of their plots and their protagonists, has strengthened this belief. This opinion, of course, is diametrically opposed to the views of those people who believe that Limericks, in their earliest days, were essentially salacious in tone.

However, let us work along the line of inquiry indicated. In the first edition of this book the author said that the earliest example of a genuine Limerick he had discovered was the ancient nursery rhyme, " Dickory, dickory dock." This is at least two hundred years old, and in all probability had its birth in the gay days of Charles the Second, when so many nursery

rhymes were originated. An old Scotch form of this Limerick, which the present writer has encountered in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" for August, 1821, runs thus :—

"Zickety, dickety dock,
The mouse ran up the nock ;
The nock struck one,
Down the mouse came,
Zickety, dickety dock."

In "Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language" (1878-1887) occurs an ingenious hypothesis as to the origin of this rhyme which agrees with the author's own conclusions that the Limerick, in its earliest form, was ecclesiastical. Says the glossary in question :—

"It is perhaps a survival of an ancient monkish rhyme, taught in schools several centuries ago ; although now disguised and mixed up with such jargon as hits the fancies of children. It was thus explained to be many years ago by a good classical scholar, to this purpose :—

" 'Sic uti dice tibi de hoc.' "

About the same time the present writer encountered this felicitous explanation, a Gallic friend sent him a French version of the English form of this jingle, and informed him that it was among the traditional nursery rhymes of his country and was generally believed to be hundreds of years old. This is it :—

Digerie, Digerie, Doge,
La souris ascend l'horloge ;
L'horloge frappe,
La souris s'échappe,
Digerie, Digerie, Doge.

When preparing this present edition of his book, he made the rather startling discovery that the Roman Catholic Church was using what, in effect, is a Limerick Prayer Book (see Chapter IV). He could find no evidence that these very modern Limerick prayers had ever been preceded by anything of the same kind in Ireland. Might they not have originated in the country of her nearest Catholic neighbour, France?

Remarkable to relate, he discovered some valuable contributory evidence on the point in that alluring work, Boswell's "Life of Johnson." This was nothing less than the discovery of a French Limerick which, if not religious in tone, dealt, at any rate, with a famous religious dispute.

"A Limerick in 'The Life of Johnson'? Absurd!" will exclaim a good many readers.

Very well, turn to the forty-seventh chapter and examine the footnote in connection with Johnson's epigram upon Miss Molly Ashton. This is it:—

"The turn of Dr. Johnson's lines appears to me to be taken from an ingenious epigram in 'The Menagiana' (Vol. III, p. 367, ed. 1716) on a young lady who appeared at a masquerade *habillé en Jesuite*, during the fierce contentions of the followers of Molinos and Jansenius, concerning free will:—

"On s'étonne ici que Caliste,
Ait pris l'habit de Moliniste,
Puisque cette jeune beauté
Ote à chacun sa liberté
N'est-ce pas une Janseniste?"

Full of hope the searcher after truth turned to some of the old French monkish chroniclers, but after much labour could only discover a "suggestion" of a Limerick, by Maistre Robert Wace, as follows:—

Nus sumes homes cum il sunt
 Tex membres avum cum il unt,
 Et altresi granz cors avum,
 Et altretant sofrir poum
 Ne nus faut fors cuer sulement.

This, according to a correspondent in "John o' London's Weekly," of February 21, 1925, enjoys a certain popularity in France to-day, and is thus rendered in modern French :—

Nous sommes hommes comme il sont,
 Nous membres avons comme ils ont,
 Et tous aussi grand corps avons,
 Et tous autant souffrir pouvons,
 Ne nous faut que fors seulement.

Admittedly this is no better than the St. Thomas Aquinas example, which one or two writers have had the temerity to suggest was the first Limerick ever composed, and for which they were appropriately ridiculed by Father Ronald Knox in his admirable review of the first edition of this book in the February (1925) number of "English Life."

But we have now secured the definite evidence of the Caliste Limerick, to say nothing of "Digerie, Digerie, Doge," whereas we can produce no British Limerick with a precise publication date earlier than 1821.

Assuming, then, that the Limerick is French in origin—how did it arrive in Limerick?

As related in the previous edition of this work, the name was applied to a species of somewhat ribald chorus song, popular in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century, in which each of an interminable set of five-line verses carried on the adventures of the hero or heroine, or dealt with those of the

inhabitant of a different Irish town, something in the manner of the modern Limerick, with a chorus commencing with the invitation, "Will you come up to Limerick?"

As a result of his subsequent researches, the writer has every reason to believe that this peculiar form of verse was brought direct to Limerick by the returned veterans of the Irish Brigade, who were attached to the French Army for a period of nearly one hundred years, from 1691.

According to O'Callaghan's "History of the Irish Brigade in the Service of France," the Brigade came into existence as a result of the Treaty of LIMERICK (1691), which brought peace between England and Ireland and released some 20,000 trained Irish soldiers for service as mercenaries abroad. The Brigade was chiefly organized in the City of LIMERICK—no doubt because it was a port further removed from the English coast than the capital. The men of County LIMERICK supplied the bulk of the original force, among them being the regiment of dragoons raised by the Earl of LIMERICK, and the two battalions of the Infantry Regiment of LIMERICK, raised and commanded by Sir John Fitzgerald, M.P. for the County of LIMERICK in the Parliament of 1689. Throughout the ninety years' service of the Brigade something like a million Irishmen served in it, and what is more likely than that the peculiar form of rhyme which had become so popular in France became equally popular among her reckless Irish allies and, as might be expected in camp composition and adaptation, became non-religious and ribald in tone?

These contentions are strengthened by the fact that the writer has discovered that Irishmen were the first among British writers to put their names to variations of this eccentric form of verse. (See examples by Sheridan and Thomas Moore in Chapter VI.)

The metre in these examples does not exactly conform to

that in the best modern Limericks, although there are several good specimens in similar form, but the verses are so nearly Limericks that the writer believes his inferences are fairly justified, the more so since he is unable to connect any previous or contemporary five-line verses with any other British writer, although Congreve in "The Way of the World" (1700), and Pope in his ode to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, a quarter of a century later, employ a species of longer verse in which the last four lines are in Limerick form.

So we reach the position that spasmodic and desultory rhymes, similar to the modern Limerick, but wholly anonymous, and bearing no distinctive title as a class, existed in England at least as far back as 1650; while a like form of verse, in respect of construction, arrived in Limerick from France some fifty years later, and gradually became so popular a lyrical medium that not only did a national poet borrow the design but, in a Rabelaisian form, it developed into the chorus song which, as already shown, was in such request at convivial Irish gatherings about a century ago.

Thus this particular construction of verse became known as the Limerick, irrespective of whether it was ribald or respectable, and when the literary activities of Edward Lear made it so popular in England as to require a generic title, the Irish one, already to hand, was made use of.

Such is the author's explication of the origin of the Limerick and the derivation of its name, and it seems such a reasonable, practical and likely one that, in the absence of any other evidence whatever, he believes it to be the true one.

It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the Limerick may be said to have established itself as a legitimate department of poetic burlesque, when the specimens composed by Edward Lear aroused a vogue for this type of lyrical nonsense which was indulged in, or appreciated, by many of the cleverest

people in the land, including literary giants of the calibre of Swinburne, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ruskin.

Lear's verses, published in his "Book of Nonsense," in 1846, were originally composed between the years 1832 and 1836, to amuse the grandchildren of his friend and patron the Earl of Derby.

Edward Lear was of Danish descent and was born in London, in 1812, the youngest of a large family. At an early age he achieved considerable success as an artist and author in connection with the subject of natural history, on which he eventually became a recognized authority.

From 1832 to 1836 he was engaged at Knowsley, the seat of Lord Derby, in drawing fine plates for the volume entitled, "The Knowsley Menagerie." He was a great favourite with the Derby family, and it was to amuse the Earl's grandchildren, as stated, that he wrote and illustrated his unique "Book of Nonsense," and set a fashion in humorous versification which was destined to become popular throughout the whole English-speaking world and to be adapted to commercial as well as recreative uses.

It must be confessed that the Limericks in Lear's work, in comparison with the best modern examples, are poor specimens from the rhyming point of view, for, in most cases, their last line is a repetition of the first. But their "plots" are ingenious, and display, in their construction, a fantastic humour which, had Lear developed it, might have ranked his name with that of Lewis Carroll and W. S. Gilbert. In justice to him it must be remembered that he originally invented them to please little children, who probably would have given no higher appreciation to more "correct" efforts, and that when published they were rendered considerably more entertaining by his eccentric drawings.

His "Book of Nonsense," however, lives to-day, when his

more serious works have been forgotten. These included accounts of his travels as a landscape painter in Greece, Albania, Corsica, Palestine, and elsewhere, and were well-written volumes, all illustrated by himself.

As a teacher of drawing he was very successful and, at one time, was drawing master to Queen Victoria. Many of his oil paintings have been exhibited in the Royal Academy. He died at San Remo in January, 1888.

There is an excellent portrait of Lear, by Holman Hunt, in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, presented by the artist in 1907. It was painted in 1857, when Lear was forty-five, and represents him as a spectacled, bushy-bearded, plain-featured man of grave aspect.

The existence of this portrait was unsuspected by the author and was revealed to him in a curious manner. Some six months after the publication of the first edition of this book he happened to be in Liverpool—a city he had not visited for twenty years—on journalistic business. He was passing the Walker Art Gallery when a sudden and heavy shower came on which drove him to seek shelter within the Gallery. Resolving to spend an hour or two looking at the wonderful art treasures, some impulse prompted him to commence his examination in the apartment to the left of the entrance hall. He had no sooner entered than he came face to face with the life-sized portrait of Lear, which is almost the first picture in the room. The incident left a curious impression on his mind which was added to when, on returning to London, he found a letter had arrived at his house addressed to Edward Lear! It was signed A. J. B., and came from Bournemouth, and enclosed an original Limerick for the next edition of this book.

How paradoxical is Fame! Here is a man of genius who sought her favours throughout the world, but who eventually obtained her imperishable award through the writing of a book

of verses written for children in an hour of frivolity. Therefore the author is impelled to lampoon her thus :—

A goddess capricious is Fame ;
You may strive to make noted your name,
But she either neglects you
Or coolly selects you
For laurels distinct from your aim.

THE GREAT LIMERICK "BOOM" OF 1907-8

No book claiming to deal with the history and development of the Limerick would be complete without some account of the remarkable Limerick craze which affected Great Britain during the latter half of the year 1907 and the earlier half of 1908.

The gentleman mainly responsible was Mr. Lincoln Springfield, editor of "London Opinion," and the competitions inaugurated in that entertaining journal were followed by similar contests arranged by dozens of newspapers and periodicals all over the kingdom. Very large prizes were offered, and for months a considerable proportion of the population derived their principal "literary" diversions from the cult of the Limerick which formed one of the chief topics of their conversation.

The craze, indeed, soon began to assume the proportion of a recognized business, with its own "trade" journals and its own "professors" who, for payment of a fee, were prepared to supply "last lines" which they declared were practically certain to win prizes !

Many of these "professors" reaped considerable profits. The author knows of a young Civil Service clerk who ran a business of this kind during his ample leisure hours and who,

in less than six months, cleared a profit of more than £200—or nearly three times his salary during that period ! He, and the majority of his rival specialists, used to advertise regularly in the principal papers running Limerick competitions, as well as in the "trade" publications. These last were chiefly devoted to details of forthcoming competitions and to discussions of recent awards, though they usually contained, also, a certain number of suggested "last lines" for current contests.

The publication of these ephemeral journals led to an amusing error on one occasion when a letter was received at the London office of "The Limerick Times"—the principal newspaper issued in the city of Limerick—inquiring what the charges were for a month's insertion of a quarter-page advertisement, with reference to the writer's marvellous "last lines."

But to return to the subject of the competitions. They were nearly all run on the lines originally laid down by "London Opinion," the principal condition being that each competitor should forward a postal order for sixpence, as entrance fee, with every attempt. The whole of the aggregate sum so received, less 5 per cent for expenses, was generally devoted to the prize fund, with the result that the papers concerned were in the supremely satisfactory position of being able to run their weekly competitions, and offer handsome prizes, at a cost to themselves of practically nothing !

Some idea of the wholesale manner in which these competitions were supported by the public may be gathered from the remarkable figures given by Mr. Buxton during a speech he made in the House of Commons, on July 17, 1908, on the Post Office Vote. Referring to the effect the Limerick craze had had upon Postal Office Revenue, he said :—"The public, in the last six months of the year, would have bought, in the ordinary way, between 700,000 and 800,000 sixpenny postal orders. They

had actually bought no less than 11,400,000—or fourteen times as much!"

Of course, in contests of such magnitude it was inevitable that some allegations of unfair selection should be made. Several of these charges were fought out in the Courts. An interesting case, heard in July, 1908, was that in which a Walthamstow railway clerk claimed £79 7s. from the proprietors of a popular weekly journal, alleging that as the sum of £158 14s. had been awarded to a competitor for a line identical with one submitted by himself, he was entitled to half.

The defence was that every care was taken in examining and checking the contents of the envelopes sent in by competitors, and the plaintiff's effort could not be traced. The rules of the competition were relied on, especially one that the editor's decision was final. That decision was as published, and the editor could not be responsible for non-delivery of any attempt submitted.

In giving his decision the judge said that but for another pronouncement in the Court of Appeal he would have given judgment for plaintiff, but as it was he would dismiss the action and make no order as to costs.

The reason for the judge's opinion, which unfortunately for the plaintiff he was precluded from giving effect to, was based upon such Solomon-like judgment that it is worth relating. He declared that since the other side claimed that the editor's decision was final, and since it had been proved, to his (the judge's) satisfaction, that the plaintiff did send the winning line, there was obviously but one conclusion to come to—and that was to agree with the editor's decision; thus the two senders of this line were entitled to halve the prize between them.

Apart from any question of periodical popularity of a frenzied kind, the Limerick has now achieved an assured place among the mental recreations of the English-speaking world, and will

always appeal to those who appreciate witty and ingenious rhyming, so that it may truly be said, "Competitions may come and competitions may go, but the Limerick goes on for ever."

THE LIMERICK IN ADVERTISING

An important phase of the great Limerick "boom" of 1907-8 was the manner in which it was applied to commercial uses. Dozens of well-known firms ran competitions in which handsome prizes were offered for the best "last line" required to complete Limericks which extolled their respective wares. In several cases the awards offered were of so stupendous a nature that some account of the competitions they figured in is necessary. The "Limerick Contest King" of those days was undoubtedly Mr. Samuda, the well-known tobacco merchant, as the following description of his munificent patronage of the art of the Limerick will show. In the autumn of 1907, for the purpose of bringing to the notice of the public a particular brand of cigarettes, he widely advertised a Limerick competition in which the first prize was an assured income of £3 per week for life! The adjudicators of this epochal contest were the editor of "The Strand Magazine," Mr. Arthur Lawrence, at that time the assistant editor of "The Daily Chronicle," and Mr. Mostyn Piggott, the well-known humorous writer. There was no entrance fee, but a condition was made that with each attempt a coupon should be enclosed proving purchase of half-a-crown's worth of the cigarettes in question.

This was the incomplete Limerick :—

That the Traylee's the best cigarette
Is a "tip" that we cannot forget.
And in buying, I'll mention
There's a three pound a week pension,

The result, as published in the last edition of "The Westminster Gazette" for October 23, 1907, was that a Mr. R. Rhodes, of Romilly Road, Cardiff, was announced as the winner, for the following effort :—

"Two good 'lines'—one you give, one you get."

If this very fortunate gentleman is living in this year of grace 1926, he can surely congratulate himself on having broken the world's record in respect of the receipt of munificent remuneration for "literary" work, for already his reward averages about £450 per word! On the other hand, if he was nearly a centenarian at the time of his unique literary triumph, then, presumably, it has not cost Mr. Samuda very much. The day following the publication of the result the bountiful tobacco merchant advertised in "The Westminster Gazette," and in other journals, a second tremendous Limerick contest, with the same stipulations attached to it as to the other. The first prize consisted of a triple award of a freehold house, a horse and trap, and an income of £2 per week for life. That the house was a highly desirable residence may be gathered from the description given in the advertisement, as follows :—

"A pretty, well-kept country villa standing in its own grounds, decorated and furnished throughout by Waring & Gillow, and containing kitchen, drawing-room, dining-room and bedrooms, with everything in it conducive to home comfort. Table-linen, crockery, household utensils, bed-linen, draperies—all are included. Every modern improvement, including bathroom (h. and c.), electric light, etc."

A prize indeed, without reckoning the £2 per week pension and the horse and trap which also went to the champion of the competition. It is a wonder that the Poet Laureate was not tempted to emerge from his seclusion and enter the lists himself

however great the risk of offending Calliope. Possibly he did compete, under another name!

The winning last line was submitted by Mr. Robert McGhee, of 3, Craignethan Gardens, Partick, Scotland, and recorded in the Press on January 10, 1908.

Mr. Samuda must have either found his patronage of Melpomene, the goddess of lyric poetry, exceedingly profitable, or have become possessed of a purse as opulent as that of Fortunatus, for on March 10, 1908, he announced a third gigantic contest around the same brand of cigarettes, with the same conditions attached, and the same adjudicators as in the first competition, but with a new verse, of course. In this case the first prize of £1000 went to Mr. Hugh Alexander, Union Bank House, Stewartown, Ayr.

The author makes no apology for disinterring the names of this triumphant trio from the dusty files of the past, but he does regret that these fortunate gentlemen live in localities so remote from the metropolis that it is impracticable for a mere Londoner to call upon them and humbly seek to gain a few hints as to the methods by which they were able to compile lines worthy of such super-recognition, for it would be ungracious to suggest that mere chance, or anything except merit, played any part in their success.

A letter to Mr. Samuda, for further information concerning his three pensioners, brought no reply, and presumably it is due to the modesty which is said to surround great benefactors that he is so reluctant to satisfy the author's curiosity and to bask in the limelight of further publicity in the matter. He did not even send a box of his well-known cigars.

However, "Kind hearts are more than Coronas and simple faith than Norman blood."

An advertising Limerick well known seventy years ago will be found in Chapter XVIII.

LIMERICK COMPETITIONS—SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE

The essential constituents of a good Limerick, surely, in the order of their importance are as follows : (1) A good last line ; (2) Ingenuity of rhyme ; (3) Plot.

It is, of course, a *sine qua non* that the lines should scan, and advisable that their scansion should be by ear rather than by quantity, because the Limerick is essentially a form of verse which appeals to the ear rather than to the eye.

With reference to the first essential point, it is the “last line” which weakens Lear’s verse not only in respect of its rhyme, but also with regard to its “achievement.” Very few of his Limericks work up to a climax, most of them ending with some such tame conclusion as “That cheerful old man of So-and-so.”

In the perfect Limerick the last line is the strongest in the whole verse. The last line in “The Young Monk of Siberia” affords an admirable example of this.

With regard to ingenuity of rhyme, the Limerick quoted in Chapter III about the young man of the War Office is a most felicitous example, and Dean Inge’s little masterpiece about the piscatorial Canon of Durham, given in the same chapter, runs it close.

Almost as important as the climax is the “plot,” which, in each case, should be that of a short story in miniature, so to speak. The leading character—and there should not be more than one—should, in the first line, set out on some adventure or achievement ; the second, third and fourth lines should show the progress made, and the fifth the result. In other words, each Limerick should have a strong “cause” as well as a strong “effect.”

The foregoing advice applies, of course, more to technique than to the imagination, for no advice is possible when it comes

to considering the "ingredients" of the plot, apart from making the obvious suggestion to favour the grotesque and preposterous, because the Limerick itself is a grotesque and preposterous form of versification. Conventionality is fatal to the making of good Limericks.

In Limerick competitions run by newspapers (in which the author of this work has won a good many prizes), or by commercial houses for the purpose of advertisement, merely the last line is required, the other four being provided by the organizers of the contest.

For competitions of this kind there are, apart from such essential qualities as imagination, a sense of humour, and a faculty for versification, a few mechanical properties which can save their owners an immense amount of time and mental labour. The most important of these are a thoroughly comprehensive dictionary of synonyms, such as Roget's "Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases," and a good rhyming dictionary.

With regard to the manner in which attempts should be submitted, it may be considered that the conditions drawn up by the various organizers leave little room for advice. But the following suggestions, based upon the author's own experience, may prove useful !

Should you submit several attempts for one competition, do not enclose them all in the same envelope, but send each under a separate cover. Each competition is, inevitably, presided over by a number of judges, and by dispatching your efforts separately, you will most likely give yourself chances with several adjudicators, whereas if they are enclosed in the same envelope they may all come before a man who can see no merit in your particular style of humour or versification. In considering your last line, ask yourself what is the likeliest thing that could happen to the individual whose adventures the Limerick concerns and then put a climax diametrically opposed to this.

For example, let us imagine that hoary old favourite, "The Young Man of Bengal" (see Chapter XVIII) as a brand-new effort, which some whimsical editor has composed, all but the last line. If we approach the problem in a common-sense way, and consider the most likely climax to the first four lines, we shall feel inclined to add a line after this style :—"And so did no dancing at all," or, "A costume that didn't enthrall." But if we throw sense and probability to the winds and consider the last line in the proper Gilbertian or Lewis Carrollesque spirit of nonsense, we are more likely to think of such a climax as the unobvious but most ludicrous one which actually does conclude this Limerick.

One final word of advice with regard to Limerick competitions : should it be your good fortune to win a big prize, or a consecutive number of small prizes in connection with one series of contests, it is a good idea to submit your further efforts under another name, and even from another address. The adjudicators are but human, and it is conceivable that they might consider that a competitor whose efforts had consistently proved worthy of award should be "handicapped" in some manner. But if you "camouflage" your identity under the name of a friend, be sure you let the latter know you have done so, or you may find yourself in the situation the author was in some years ago in connection with a weekly periodical edited by the late Charles Garvice. Having won four consolation prizes of a guinea each, in succession, he submitted his fifth attempt in his wife's maiden name, and then, in a rush of work, forgot to inform her. Three weeks later she joyfully informed him that she had had a great stroke of luck, as a paper had sent her a cheque for fifteen guineas !

CHAPTER ONE

The Limericks of Lear

(*Examples from "The Book of Nonsense"*)

There was a young person of Smyrna,
Whose grandmother threatened to burn her,
But she seized on the cat,
And said, "Granny, burn that !
You incongruous old woman of Smyrna."

There was an old man who said, "How
Shall I flee from this horrible cow ?
I will sit on this stile
And continue to smile,
Which may soften the heart of the cow."*

There was a young girl of Majorca,
Whose aunt was a very fast walker ;
She walked sixty miles
And leaped fifteen stiles,
Which astonished that girl of Majorca.



* I have received a clever Greek version of the above, as translated by an erudite schoolboy of sixteen. It runs as follows :—

Γέρων τις ἔφη, πῶς φοβήσω
βοῦν τήνδε, καὶ φεῦξιν εύρησω ;
ἔρκει ἐγκαθίζων,
γελῶν τε καὶ παιζων,
αὐτὴν μαλακωτέραν θήσω.

There was an old person of Anerly,
Whose conduct was strange and unmannerly.
He rushed down the Strand
With a pig in each hand,
But returned in the evening to Anerly.



There was an old man of Thermopylæ,
Who never did anything properly.
But they said, "If you choose
To boil eggs in your shoes
You shall no longer stay in Thermopylæ."

There was an old man who supposed
 That the street door was partially closed ;
 But some very large rats
 Ate his coats and his hats,
 While that futile old gentleman dozed.*

There was an old man of the Cape,
 Who purchased a Barbary Ape,
 Till the ape, one dark night,
 Set the house all alight,
 Which burned that old man of the Cape.†

There was a young lady of Wales,
 Who caught a large fish, without scales ;
 When she lifted her hook,
 She exclaimed, " Only look ! "
 That ecstatic young lady of Wales.†

There was an old man of the Cape,
 Who made himself garments of crape.
 When asked, " Do they tear ? "
 He replied, " Here and there,
 But they keep such a beautiful shape ! "

Mrs. EVANS NEPEAN.‡



* One of the very few examples in which Lear has avoided the repetitionary last line.

† To show the improvement a last line with a different rhyme could make to the above the author has included in this chapter a couple of "complete" Limericks based on two of the geographical names given above.

‡ See last page of her book, "The Day of Small Things." For some obscure reason the authorship of this Limerick is usually credited to Robert Louis Stevenson.

Said a foolish young lady of Wales,
"A smell of escaped gas prevails."
Then she searched, with a light,
And later that night
Was collected—in seventeen pails!

L. R.

CHAPTER TWO

The Limericks of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

There's a combative artist named Whistler,
Who is, like his own hog-hairs, a bristler.

A tube of white lead
And a punch on the head
Offer varied attractions to Whistler.

An historical painter, named Brown,
Was in manners and language a clown.

At epochs of victual,
Both "pudden" and "kittle"
Were expressions familiar to Brown.

There once was a painter named Scott,
Who seemed to have hair, but had not.

He seemed to have sense,
'Twas an equal pretence
On the part of the painter named Scott.*



* Rossetti's Limericks spared neither his friends nor his enemies—nor himself. The three Limericks given above were all on intimate and devoted friends of his. The second, of course, concerns Ford Madox Brown, the historical painter, while the last lampoons William Bell Scott, the poet and painter, who was his close friend from boyhood.

There is a poor sneak called Rossetti,
 As a painter with many kicks met he—
 With more than a man—
 But sometimes he ran,
 And that saved the rear of Rossetti.*

There's a publishing party, named Ellis, †
 Who's addicted to poets with bellies.
 He has at least two,
 One in fact, one in view.
 And God knows what will happen to Ellis.

As a critic, the poet, Buchanan,
 Thinks Pseudo much safer than Anon.
 Into Maitland he shrunk,
 But the smell of the skunk
 Guides the shuddering nose to Buchanan.‡

There is a dull painter, named Wells,
 Who is duller than anyone else ;
 With the face of a horse
 He sits by you and snorts—
 Which is very offensive in Wells.§



* Rossetti must have been among the least conceited of men, for this was written after he had achieved considerable distinction as a painter.

† The Ellis referred to was the publisher of the volume of the poet's works from which these rhymes are taken. Rossetti was decidedly fat in middle age, but very few fat men—particularly if poets—would dare to make fun of their corporeal greatness in this way.

‡ Written as the result of an attack which Robert Buchanan, the poet and novelist, made upon his poems, in "The Contemporary Review," in 1871.

§ This is certainly one of the worst Limericks ever perpetrated, and is included to give aspiring young "Limerickists" a hopeful view of their own work !

CHAPTER THREE

The Clerical Limerick*

There was a good Canon of Durham,
Who swallowed a hook and a worrum.

Said the Dean to the Bishop,
“ I’ve brought a big fish up,
But I fear we may have to inter’m.”

DEAN INGE † (of St. Paul’s Cathedral).

There once was a madame called Tussaud,
Who loved the grand folk in “ Who’s Who ” so,
That she made them in wax,
Both their fronts and their backs,
And asked no permission to do so.

REV. CHARLES INGE.



* The author has been vastly intrigued to discover that not only has “ The Church ” been responsible for perpetrating more Limericks than all the other professions put together, but that a very large proportion of Limericks, in general, suggest a clerical atmosphere, both in respect of their plots and their protagonists. He himself can lay no claim to clerical distinction, although “ The Christian Register,” of Boston, U.S.A., in a reference to the book, on January 21, 1926, was complimentary enough to refer to him as “ an English Bishop.”

† In his review of the first edition of this book, Mr. Stuart Hodgson, editor of “ The Daily News,” quotes a variant of the Limerick which has been known to him for many years and which, in his opinion, is much better. This is it :—

There was an old Canon of Durham,
Who by accident trod on a worrum.
He said to the beadle,
“ Prepare the Cathedral,
Perhaps they would like to inter’m.”

A certain young gourmet of Crediton
Took some paté de foie gras and spread it on
A chocolate biscuit,
Then murmured, "I'll risk it."
His tomb bears the date that he said it on.

REV. CHARLES INGE.*



* Other Inge-nious contributions by this gentleman appear in Chapter XIX.

There was a young man at the War Office,
Whose head was an absolute store of vice.

Each warning severe
Went in at one ear,
And out of the opposite orifice.

J. W. CHURTON.*

Our Vicar is good Mr. Inge.
One evening he offered to sing,
So we asked him to stoop,
Put his head in a loop,
And pulled at each end of the string.†

There was a young man of Havana
Said, " Love ends in smoke, for the manner
Of smoking, I vow,
So effeminate now
Has become, that I cannot have Anna."

THE RIGHT REV. J. E. C. WELLDON.‡



* The late J. W. Churton was the uncle of Dean Inge, and the Rev. Charles Inge is his brother. The former composed the above Limerick when a schoolboy at Charterhouse.

† Mr. H. G. Dixey, of Oxford, an old friend of the Inge family, and himself a Limerick connoisseur, whose work is represented in Chapter XVIII, in sending the above, writes:—"My otherwise respected father was once guilty of this scandalous production."

‡ The genial Dean of Durham, in sending the above, wrote:—"This Limerick is at least original, even if it be an original sin."

There was a young lady of Cirencester,
Who went to consult her solicitor.

When he asked for his fee,
She said, " Fiddle-de-dee !
I only dropped in as a visitor."

DR. BLOMFIELD (late Bishop of St. Albans).*

There was a tall student of Girton,
Who had such a very short skirt on,
That her tutor said, " Dear,
You look very queer,
Have you really a skirt or a shirt on ? "

REV. S. G. STANTON.

There was a young monk of Siberia,
Who of fasting grew wearier and wearier,
Till at length, with a yell,
He burst from his cell,
And devoured the Father Superior !

I wouldn't mind betting a tenner
On the future of Mr. McKenna.
I'm sure, when he dies,
He won't reach Paradise,
But will certainly go to Gehenna.

THE RIGHT REV. ALFRED EARLE (Bishop of Marlborough).†



* Composed as an aid to the peculiar pronunciation of the town it refers to, and first published in "Punch," January 10, 1863.

† The country rector who kindly sent the editor this ingenious skit on the late Chancellor of the Exchequer writes:—"It was composed by Dr. Earle when Dean of Exeter. So far as my memory goes Mr. McKenna was, about 1900, responsible for some changes which adversely affected Church Schools, and this was Dr. Earle's comment. This pleasant outlook, or prophecy, is probably unknown to Mr. McKenna."

When the Bishop who lived at Llandaff
 Had his stipend reduced by one-half,
 He sullied his lawn
 By attempting to pawn
 His gorgeous pastoral staff.

When the wife of the Bishop of Oxon
 Eloped with a Portuguese coxswain,
 He exclaimed, "I deplore
 The effect on the poor,
 It's the sort of adventure that shocks 'un."

W. J. DE BURGH.*

He is really an absolute lamb;
 But when he sat down in the jam
 On taking his seat
 At our Sunday school treat,
 We all heard our Vicar say, "Stand up, please, while
 I say grace."†

The complaints of the beasts in the Ark
 Would be worthy of further remark,
 If that hadn't been voiced
 In "When it was Moist,"
 (By the author of "When it was Dark").

FATHER RONALD KNOX.



* Mr. de Burgh is also the author of the preceding example. In case there happens to exist some pudding-brained individual who might contrive to imagine that this gentleman's verses were somewhat "personal," it may be judicious to state that they apply to no particular Bishops, either past, present, or future.

† The author is informed by Dean Inge that this Limerick, and the Siberian monk example, were composed by well-known "pillars of the Church."

Evangelical vicar in want
 Of a portable, second-hand font,
 Would dispose of the same
 For a portrait (in frame),
 Of the Bishop-Elect of Vermont.

FATHER RONALD KNOX.

There was a young man who said, " Damn !
 It is borne upon me that I am
 An engine that moves
 In predestinate grooves,
 And less like a 'bus than a tram."*

MAURICE E. HARE.

A Sequel :

And after all this he said, " Curse !
 It all goes from better to worse ;
 For whatever I *am*,
 Human, Beast, 'Bus, or Tram,
 I'm bound to end up on a hearse."

E. ROWAN-DAVIES (1921).



* This famous skit on Predestination is popularly supposed to have been written by Father Ronald Knox, but he informs the author of this book :— " The bus-tram Limerick was, I believe, known in Oxford about twenty years before I came up. The reason why I am supposed to have written it is that I once wrote a companion verse to it, on Idealism " (given above).

The mystery is now solved, for a few days after the publication of the first British edition of this book its author received a letter from Mr. Maurice E. Hare, who stated :—" I wrote the bus-tram Limerick at Oxford, in 1908 I believe, but certainly not earlier than 1906 or later than 1909.

There once was a man who said, "God
Must think it exceedingly odd
If He finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there's no one about in the Quad."

FATHER RONALD KNOX.

"O God, for as much as without Thee
We are not enabled to doubt Thee,
Help us all by Thy grace
To convince the whole race
It knows nothing whatever about Thee."*

There was an old Bishop of Leigh,
Who climbed the church spire for a spree.
As an athletic feat
'Twas not easy to beat,
But it raised a great storm in the See.

ALLAN SMITH ("Daily News," 23.4.26).

There were two young ladies of Birmingham,
I know a sad story concerning 'em.
They stuck needles and pins
In the right reverend shins
Of the Bishop engaged in confirming 'em.



* Concerning this Limerick, Father Knox writes:—"Here is a Modernist prayer which I am told I wrote."

There was an old lady of Harrow
 Who rode into church in a barrow.
 When she stuck in the aisle
 She said with a smaisle,
 " They build these 'ere churches too narrow."



H.M.B.

There was a young curate of Hants,
 Who suddenly took off his pants.
 When asked why he did,
 He replied, " To get rid
 Of this regular army of ants!"

E. V. KNOX* ("Evoe," of "Punch").

* * * * *

* Brother to Father Knox.

The poor benighted Hindu,
He does whate'er he kin do,
 He sticks to his caste
 From first to last,
And for pants he makes his skin do.

REV. I. W. PAPWORTH.

There was a young curate of Kew,
Who kept a large cat in a pew,
 He taught it each week
 Alphabetical Greek,
But it never got further than MU.

There was a young lady of Cheadle,
Who sat down in church on a needle ;
 Though deeply imbedded
 'Twas luckily threaded,
So she had it removed by the beadle.

IN FRENCH.

Ce fut une gitane de Séville,
Qui s'assit un jour sur une aiguille ;
 Mais, étant enfilée,
 Elle fut vite retirée
Par un excellent père de famille.

IN GERMAN.

Es war 'mal ein Fräulein von Adel,
Die setzt' sich—auweh !—auf 'ne Nadel.
 Tief stach sie, o Graus !
 Doch es zog sie heraus
Ein Ritter ohn' Furcht und ohn' Tadel.

J. W.

There once was a pious young priest
 Who lived almost wholly on yeast ;
 “ For,” he said, “ it is plain
 We must all rise again,
 And I want to get started, at least.”

There was an Archdeacon who said,
 “ May I take off my gaiters in bed ? ”
 But the Bishop said, “ No,
 Wherever you go
 You must wear them until you are dead.”

There was an old prelate of Brittany,
 Who always went wrong in the Litany.
 Exclaimed he, “ I can’t
 Find a suitable chant,
 The words, somehow, don’t seem to fit any.”

ARTHUR STANLEY.

A flighty young woman of Ayr
 From church tried to steal during prayer,
 But the squeak of her shoes
 So enlivened the pews
 She sat down again in despair.

There was a young curate of Kidderminster
 Who very reluctantly chid a spinster,
 For she used, on the ice,
 Words not at all nice
 When he inadvertently slid against her.

Said a literal vicar of Hurst,
 " St. Luke says the Last shall be First :
 So if I drop behind,
 You'll know I've a mind!
 To be first to be last—to be first ! "

NORA WILDE.

An Abbess whom all did admire,
 To holiness much did aspire.
 When asked to a ball,
 She replied, " Not at all ;
 I've another engagement that's Prior."

Certain pairs who had banns called, respectively,
 Were married at Whitsun, collectively ;
 Said the parson in doubt,
 " Let them sort themselves out."
 They are pondering, now, retrospectively.

There was a young curate, named Stone,
 Who lived by himself, quite alone.
 He'd a face like a hatchet,
 I defy you to match it.
 Quoth he, " I don't mind—it's my own ! "

F. H. COZENS.*

Said a great Congregationalist preacher
 To a hen, " You're a beautiful creature."
 The hen, pleased with that,
 Laid an egg in his hat,
 And thus did the Henry Ward Beecher !

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



* The veteran organist of St. Stephen's Church, Coleman Street, London, E.C., where he has officiated for more than sixty years.

A nervous young fellow of Reading,
 When called on the day of his wedding,
 Was seized with such fear
 That he feigned not to hear,
 And hid himself under the bedding.

THE LATE CANON HUGH PEARSON (Canon of
 Windsor and Vicar of Sonning-on-Thames).



An indolent vicar of Bray
 His roses allowed to decay ;
 His wife, more alert,
 Bought a powerful squirt,
 And said to her spouse, " Let us spray."

L. R.

CHAPTER FOUR

Limericks and Religion

SOME remarkable evidence as to the manner in which the Limerick is being used as an instructional and proselytizing medium in the interests of religious doctrine—chiefly in respect of children—has been received by the author of this book.

In a very informative letter, the Rev. J. Hotine, of St. Michael's Church, Teignmouth, Devonshire, states :—“ We have adopted this rather frivolous metre as a medium of instruction in the catechism here and find it answers very well. For instance, the devotion of the months :—

JUNE

(The Sacred Heart.)

In June English weather is hot
(Or should be, though sometimes it's not).
Like the love in God's heart,
Once pierced by a dart,
Both for biggest and tiniest tot.

“ The idea has been quite effective,” continues Mr. Hotine, “ as the jingles are easy to remember. At St. Thomas of Canterbury, Kingswear (Devon), they had the following in the Parish Church magazine, at the time of their patronal festival :—

Dear children, your patron is dead.
 Wicked soldiers cut open his head.
 Though your head you'll not lose,
 Still you can, if you choose,
 Be as holy, by praying, instead.*

“These and many more are made up for the occasion.”

The famous Roman Catholic Society of St. Peter and St. Paul are working along similar lines, both in Great Britain and in the United States, and have published what may be described as a Limerick Prayer Book. The author of this unique enciridion, who signs himself, “G. L. P.,” thus epitomizes its motive in the Preface :—

These rhymes are designed by a priest,
 To affect your religion like yeast :
 If they help it to grow
 Like the yeast in the dough,
 There'll be one better Christian at least.

In his Introduction the ingenious lyrst delves back some sixteen hundred years and acknowledges his indebtedness to “The heresiarch Arius who, in order to spread his false teaching, composed ballads of heretical doctrine in the popular metres of the day. It occurred to me to make use of his method to serve a better purpose.”†



* In allusion, of course, to the murder, in Canterbury Cathedral, of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170.

† On first reading the above, the author wondered whether, by any possibility, Arius could have been the actual inventor of the Limerick ! If so, he has a great deal more to answer for than the invention of the decayed tenets for which he is traditionally blamed.

The author does not feel competent to offer any criticism as to the pro-

The reverend gentleman goes on to say that he was emboldened to publish these verses by the success which greeted their application among the children of Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire.

From this remarkable collection the following seem to be the most free from doctrine and dogma and to have, in consequence, the most general appeal :—

FAITH

You shall trust the Lord God from the start
With your life and your mind and your heart ;
Till you come, in His strength,
To know fully at length
Him whom now you know only in part.

HOPE

This world is a very good place
For learning to run the straight race ;
For the fasting, oppressed,
And downcast shall be blessed,
And the poor shall praise God to His face.

PRAYER

There was a wise man who said, “ Prayer
Is as simple as breathing the air,
If you always recall,
Whatsoever befall,
That your Heavenly Father is there.”



priety, or otherwise, of this novel form of juvenile tutelage. Apart, however, from any question of ethics the idea seems a very attractive one, and there is no doubt that its application could render more alluring many of the monotonous elegies which now cumber the pages of our standard hymnals.

ALMSGIVING

There was a wise man who said, " Odd,
If the Heavenly path could be trod
By spending your cash
Upon pleasures and trash
And not spending any on God."

MATRIMONY

The marriage of man and of wife
Let no law put asunder, nor strife :
Till death do them part
They must share with one heart
Home, children, joy, labour and life.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Stock Exchange Variety *

Said an irate young wife of Tralee,
“ I demand a divorce by decree ;
In the holiday pack
Which my husband brought back,
There were corsets which didn’t fit me ! ”

CAPTAIN H. J. ANDREWS.

A typist who worked at Whitehall
Attended a fancy-dress ball ;
Some say that she wore
Less behind than before,
While others said—nothing at all.

CAPTAIN H. J. ANDREWS.

There was a young lady of Kent,
Who said that she knew what it meant
When men asked her to dine,
Gave her cocktails and wine,
She knew what it meant—but she went !



* This title is used to describe a generic class of Limericks. It is not suggested that all, or even the majority of, the examples in this chapter were originated by the gentlemen who so efficiently manipulate “ bulls ” and “ bears,” or that Limericks of unimpeachable respectability have not been perpetrated by them. There was one composed, it is understood, in 1883.

An athletic young lady of Clewer
Once incited a bull to pursue her ;
 But she vaulted the gate
 Just a fraction too late,
Now when she sits down she says, " Oo-er ! "

There was an old fellow of Tyre,
Who constantly sat on the fire.
 When asked, " Is it hot ? "
 He replied, " No, it's not ;
I'm James Winterbottom, Esquire."

There was a young lady of Joppa,
Who came a society cropper.
 She went to Ostend
 With a gentleman friend ;
The rest of the story's improper.

There was a young poet of Thusis,
Who took twilight walks with the Muses.
 But these nymphs of the air
 Are not quite what they were,
And the practice has led to abuses.

There was a young lady of Tottenham,
Her manners—she'd wholly forgotten 'em ;
 While at tea, at the Vicar's,
 She took off her mittens,
Explaining she felt much too hot in 'em !

There was a young girl of Australia,
Who went to a dance as a dahlia.
When the petals uncurled,
It revealed to the world
That the dress, as a dress, was a fail-ia !

There was once a sculptor named Phidias,
Who had a distaste for the hideous,
So he "sculpted" Aphrodite
Without any "nightie,"
And shocked all the ultra-fastidious !

There was a young lady of Spain,
Who went and undressed in the train.
But a saucy young porter
Saw more than he orter
And asked her to do it again.

An acrobat lady of Brussels
Was charged with the wearing of bustles;
Said she, "It's a lie
Which I flatly deny;
It's merely my natural muscles."

S. J. A. WITHERSPOON.

A modest young fellow named Braby
Was once called Papa by a baby.
Said he, "Draw it mild,
You impudent child,
I don't think I'm your Pa—though I may be!"

Two damsels whose looks were most pious
 Exclaimed, " To the beach let us hious,
 Where scant bathing suits
 Will make men, the bruits,
 Just ious, and ious, and ious ! "

M. W. B.

A patient young husband of Ayr
 Heard below his wife's piteous prayer,
 " Slip on something quick,
 And come down ; I feel sick."
 So he slipped on the very top stair.

BERT LESTER TAYLOR.

There's a wealthy young man of Bagdad
 Whose morals are terribly bad.
 He keeps seven Circassians
 As a vent for his passions,
 In fact, he's no end of a lad.*

There was an old man in an omnibus,
 Who kicked up a terrible fomnibus.
 It made him madvertisement
 To see an advertisement
 Which told him to cast off his tromnibus.

That forward young Schéhérazade
 Attempted to vamp the Royal Guard.
 They managed to limit her
 By means of a scimitar . . .
 But her dress was distressingly scarred.



* This Limerick and the two following appeared, originally, in the popular Cambridge University Magazine "The Granta."

There was an old man of Boulogne,
Who sang a most topical song.

It wasn't the words
Which frightened the birds,
But the horrible double entendre.



IN GREEK.

Λέγουσι γέροντα Βιλογγόν
ἀδειν τοπικώτατον φθογγόν
οὐχ ὃσ' ἐβόησε
κόρακας ἐφόβησε,
ἀλλ' ὑπονόημα δίλογγον.

There was a young flapper of Durleigh,
 Who had her hair bobbed short and curly ;
 'Twas easy to see
 How shapely was she,
 For her dresses left off very early.

CHARLES W. HOWARD.

There was a young girl named Bianca,
 Who slept while the ship was at anchor ;
 But awoke with dismay
 When she heard the mate say :
 " We must pull up the top sheet and spanker."

There was a young lady of Erskine,
 Who had a remarkably fair skin.
 When I said to her, " Mabel,
 You look well in your sable,"
 She replied, " I look best in my bearskin."

There was a young lady of Truro,
 Who packed all her clothes in a bureau ;
 But burglars came there,
 So the poor girl must wear
 The costume of Eve " in futuro."

There was a young lady named Starkey,
 Who foolishly married a darkey.
 And then, for her sins,
 She had three pairs of twins,
 One white, one black, and one khaki !*



* I am assured that the author of this scandalous and delightful rhyme is a well-known Brighton clergyman !

Your verses, dear Fred, I surmise,
Were not meant for clerical eyes.

The Bishop and Dean
Cannot think what they mean,
And the curate turns pink with surprise.*

REV. CHARLES INGE.



* Sent by Mr. Inge to a relative, after the receipt of a batch of Limericks of a particularly piquant kind.

CHAPTER SIX

Literary Limericks

(*Examples by well-known writers.*)

At twenty she mocks at the duty you taught her ;
Oh, what a plague is an obstinate daughter !

Sighing and whining,
Dying and pining,
Oh, what a plague is an obstinate daughter !

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN. (See "The Duenna.")

Though Wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorned the lore she brought me.
My only books
Were woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

THOMAS MOORE.* (From "The Times I've Lost.")

A fat man who lived on the Rhine
Was asked, " At what hour will you dine ? "
He answered, " Eleven,
Three, four, five and seven,
Six, eight, and a quarter to nine."

BRET HARTE.



* In Moore's forgotten lyric, "A Lottery, a Lottery," the choruses are in complete Limerick form. (See the 1825 edition of his collected works.) That this delightful Irish poet is, most appropriately, the real pioneer of the Limerick, the present editor has no doubt.

A "QUARTETTE" BY SIR W. S. GILBERT.*

Oh, my name is John Wellington Wells,
 I'm a dealer in magic and spells,
 In blessings and curses,
 And ever-filled purses,
 In prophecies, witches, and knells.

If you want a proud foe to "make tracks"—
 If you'd melt a rich uncle in wax—
 You've but to look in
 On our resident Djinn,
 Number seventy, Simmery Axe !

There was a Professor named Chesterton,
 Who went for a walk with his best shirt on.
 Being hungry he ate it,
 But lived to regret it,
 As it ruined for life his digesterton.



* When the author of this work informed a devotee of Sullivan that the latter had composed airs for Limericks he emphatically denied it, but was convinced on these verses from the famous song in "The Sorcerer" being recalled to him. Other examples occur in "The Yeomen of the Guard" ("The Man Who would Woo a Fair Maid"). Actually, Gilbert was a most prolific Limerick bard, although, till now, he has never received credit or even acknowledgment for this. But among his "Bab Ballads" is a complete drama in twenty-one Limericks entitled, "The Story of Prince Agib." The opening verse runs as follows:—

Strike the concertina's melancholy string !
 Blow the spirit-stirring harp like anything !
 Let the piano's martial blast
 Rouse the echoes of the past.
 For Agib, Prince of Tartary, I sing !

There was an old man of St. Bees,
 Who was stung in the arm by a wasp.
 When asked, " Does it hurt ? "
 He replied, " No, it doesn't,
 I'm so glad it wasn't a hornet."*

A FRENCH SERIES BY GEORGE DU MAURIER.†

Il était un homme de Madère
 Qui frappa le nez a son père ;
 On demandait : " Pourquoi ? "
 Il repondit : " Ma foi !
 Vous n'avez pas connu mon père ! "

Translation

A young man from Madeira arose
 And punched his progenitor's nose ;
 When the people asked, " Why ? "
 He responded, " My eye !
 You don't know the old man, I suppose ! "

Il existe un Espinstère à Tours
 Un peu vite, et qui porte toujours
 Un ulsteur peau-de-phoque,
 Un chapeau bilicoque
 Et des nicreboquers en velours.



* In a letter the author has received from Mr. Vaughan Pott, he states that D'Oyly Carte told him that W. S. G. composed this Limerick at the request of Mrs. Bernard Beere, the actress, who, being affected by the Limerick craze, had been bothering him for an original specimen.

† These are the best of about a score of French Limericks by the author of "Trilby," most of which originally appeared in "Punch."

À Cologne est un maître d'hôtel
 Hors du centre du ventre duquel
 Se projekte une sorte
 De tiroir qui supporte
 La moutarde, et le poivre, et le sel.

“Cassez-vous, cassez-vous, cassez-vous,
 O mer, sur vos froids gris cailloux !”
 Ainsi traduisait Laure
 Au profit d'Isidore
 (Bon jeune homme, et son future époux).

There was a bad poet named Chough,
 Whom it's perfectly useless to puff ;
 For the public, though dull,
 Has not quite such a skull
 As belongs to believers in Chough.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1911).*



* Apropos of Swinburne's Limericks, Mr. Coulson Kernahan, who knew the poet well, does not agree with Mr. Shaw's suggestion that their exclusion from all printed record is due to ribaldry and indelicacy which would offend the general reader, for in a letter to the author he describes how, on one occasion, when Theodore Watts-Dunton and he were dining at Swinburne's house, the conversation turned upon a special number of "The Graphic," which contained an illustrated supplement entitled, "Poets of the Day." Relates Mr. Kernahan :—"Swinburne ran through the pictured poets, cataloguing them, complimenting them, or chaffing them, upon their appearance or their poetry, even composing, on the spur of the moment, nonsense verses and Limericks that hit off with delicate humour or mordant irony the personal or poetical peculiarities of the different 'bards,' as he called them. Now that he and so many of those bards are, alas ! gone, I hesitate to repeat in cold blood, and so long after, what was said on the spur of the moment and among friends."

After this it would be invidious for the author of this work to attempt to disinter these obviously personal Limericks from the past, apart from the example on Mr. Chough.

There was a young lady of station,
 "I love man" was her sole exclamation;
 But when men cried, "You flatter,"
 She replied, "Oh! no matter,
 Isle of Man is the true explanation."

LEWIS CARROLL.*

There was a young boy of Quebec,
 Who fell through the ice to his neck.
 When asked, "Are you friz?"
 He replied, "Yes, I is,
 But we don't call this cold in Quebec."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

FOUR EXAMPLES BY WALTER PARKE †

(The "London Hermit").

There was an old waiter of Wapping
 Drew corks for a week, without stopping.
 Cried he, "It's too bad!
 The practice I've had,
 Yet cannot prevent them from popping!"



* The editor has received this Limerick from Miss Vera Beringer; it is probably the only one Lewis Carroll ever perpetrated. In common with the rest of the English theatre-going public, he was charmed with Miss Beringer's acting as "Little Lord Fauntleroy" in the original London presentation of that play in 1890, and the little girl, as she then was, became one of his many child friends. He sent her the Limerick when she was spending a holiday in Manxland.

† These originally appeared in "Songs of Singularity," published in 1874.

There was a young man who was bitten
By forty-two cats and a kitten.

Cried he, "It is clear
My end is quite near.
No matter ; I'll die like a Briton."

There was an old hag of Malacca,
Who smoked such atrocious tobacca,
When tigers came near
They trembled with fear,
And didn't attempt to attacka.

There was an old man of Peru,
Who dreamt he converted a Jew.
He woke in the night
In a deuce of a fright,
And found it was perfectly true.

'Twas a modern young lady who swore,
Through Adelphi by-ways as she tore,
No one should tarry her
Way through Shaw's barrier,
And where Barrie looks down on the shore.

WALTER JERROLD.*

There was an old man of the Rhone,
Who found the Philosopher's Stone.
He transmuted to gold
All his friends, young and old ;
And piled them in heaps with a groan.

L. DE GIBERNE SIEVEKING.



* Grandson of the famous Douglas of that ilk, first editor of "Punch."

FIVE EXAMPLES BY COSMO MONKHOUSE.

(From that author's little book of "Nonsense Rhymes.")

There once was a girl of Lahore
 The same shape behind as before ;
 As no one knew where
 To offer a chair,
 She had to sit down on the floor.

There was an old party of Lyme,
 Who married three wives at one time.
 When asked, " Why the third ? "
 He replied, " One's absurd,
 And bigamy, sir, is a crime ! "*

There was an old man of Norwich
 Who could eat twenty bowls of hot porridge ;
 But he once met a " mon "
 Who could eat twenty-one,
 So he gave him his daughter in " morwich."

There once was an old monk of Basing
 Whose salads were something amazing ;
 But he told his confessor
 That Nebuchadnezzor
 Had given him hints upon grazing.



* "Nuttall's Standard Dictionary" and most other lexicons describe "bigamy" as "the crime of having *two* wives or two husbands at the same time."

There once was an old man of Brest,
Who always was funnily drest ;
 He wore gloves on his nose,
 And a hat on his toes,
And a boot in the midst of his chest.

FOUR EXAMPLES BY RANDALL DAVIES.

(From that author's "Lyttel Booke of Nonsense.")

There was an old man of Sheerness,
Who invited two friends to play chess,
 But he'd lent all the pieces
 To one of his nieces,
And had stupidly lost the address.

There was a young housemaid at Ashdown,
Who insisted on pulling the sash down ;
 Being duly insured
 She was six months being cured,
But the doctor insisted on cash down.

There was an old man of the Andes
Who lived upon Sodas and Brandies.
 When asked by the Press
 For his name and address,
He replied, "I'm the last of the Dandies."

There was a young lady of Lowestoft,
Whose figure was nothing to boast of.
 But odd as it was,
 It was chiefly because
It was *certainly* not made the most of.

There was a young fellow named Tommy,
 Well-known for his fun and bonhomie ;
 But he made a faux-pas
 With his young lady's ma,
 Which landed him in the consommé.

F. W. THOMAS.*

There was a young fellow named Lloyd,
 Who was seldom if ever annoyed.
 And though you might choke him,
 You couldn't provoke him,
 His sang was so terribly froid.

F. W. THOMAS.

An angry young husband called Bicket
 Said : " Turn yourself round and I'll kick it ;
 You have painted my wife
 In the nude to the life.
 Do you think, Mr. Greene, it was cricket ? "

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

There was an old man who said, " Motion
 A state is of comical notion.
 It would seem to connote
 That a single U-boat
 Could be at two spots in the ocean."

J. ST. LOE STRACHEY (editor of " The Spectator ").



* The popular humorist of the London " Daily News " and " The Star. "

There was a young man of Montrose,
Who had pockets in none of his clothes.

When asked by his lass
Where he carried his brass,
He said, " Darling, I pay through the nose."

ARNOLD BENNETT.*



John B.
A poodle was charged by the law
With resembling Hall Caine. With his paw
Pressed close to his forehead,
He sobbed, " Yes, it's horrid,
But at least I'm not like Bernard Shaw ! "

COULSON KERNAHAN.



* In sending this Limerick, Mr. Arnold Bennett confesses:—"I have composed various Limericks, but this is the only one I can remember."

'Tis said woman loves not her lover
 So much as she loves his love of her ;
 Then loves she her lover
 For love of her lover
 Or love of her love of her lover ?

CAROLYN WELLS.



A tutor who tooted the flute
 Tried to tutor two young tooters to toot ;
 Said the two to the tutor,
 " Is it harder to toot, or
 To tutor two tooters to toot ? "

CAROLYN WELLS.

A rapid young couple, named Ord,
 Went "scorching" one day, in a Ford,
 But a spill in a dell
 Transferred them to—well—
 Where "scorchers" in millions are stored!

K. C. SPIERS.

There was an old fellow of Croydon,
 Whose cook was a regular hoyden.
 She would sit on his knees
 When shelling the peas,
 Or similar duties employed on.

THE RIGHT HON. SIR GILBERT PARKER.

There was an old man who said, "Please
 Give me some of that excellent cheese.
 I have smelt it for miles,
 Coming over the stiles
 To your beautiful house on the Tees."

E. V. KNOX ("Evoe" of "Punch").

French girl sees the Falls of Lodore—
 (She never had seen them before.)
 "But where is the gold?"
 She asks, "I was told
 I should see Les Cascades de l'Eau d'Or!"

SIR GEORGE HENSCHEL.*



* This famous composer, and founder of the London Symphony Concerts and the first conductor of the Boston (U.S.) Symphony Orchestra, has quite a reputation among his friends as a Limerick bard. Would it be presumptuous to suggest that a Limerick Ballad, written and composed by himself, would initiate a form of musical composition that would prove highly popular?

A penniless youth of Latvia,
 Grew rich through this clever idea :
 He went to the U.S.,
 And married a Jewess
 With ten thousand dollars a ye-ar !

SIR GEORGE HENSCHEL.

There was a pale man of Shanghai,
 Who was bothered all day by a fly.
 He said, " I will kill you ! "
 The fly said, " Oh ! will you ? "
 And gave him a bite in the eye !

SIR FRANCIS BURNAND

I'd rather have fingers than toes ;
 I'd rather have ears than a nose ;
 And as for my hair
 I'm glad it's all there,
 I'll be awfully sad when it goes.

GELETT BURGESS.

There was once a Giraffe who said, " What
 Do I want with my tea, strong or hot ?
 For my throat's such a length,
 The tea loses its strength,
 And is cold ere it reaches the spot."

OLIVER HERFORD.

There was a young lady of Twickenham,
 Whose shoes were too tight to walk quickenham.
 She bore them awhile,
 But at last, at a stile,
 She pulled them both off, and was sickenham.

OLIVER HERFORD.

There once were some learned M.D.'s
 Who captured some germs of disease
 And infected a train,
 Which, without causing pain,
 Allowed one to catch it with ease.

OLIVER HERFORD.

LIMERICK IN VERS LIBRE

There was a young
 poet
 from Trinity,
 But
 though he could
 trill
 (like a linnet),
 he refused to
 complete
 any poem
 with feet, saying
 " Idiots ! Can't you see
 that what I'm specializing in is
 Free
 Verse ! "

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

The ankle's chief end is exposiery
 Of the latest designs in silk hosiery,
 Also, I suspect,
 It was made to connect
 The part called the calf with the tosiery.

ANTHONY EUWER.

There once was a huge Dinosaurian,
 Prodigious and phantasmagorian,
 Who perished of blight
 When a wee trilobite
 Sneered, "Oh, you are early Victorian!"

ARTHUR GUITERMAN.

A Flea who felt phlebotomous,
 Assailed a Hippopotamus;
 The Hippo, he
 Sat on the Flea,
 And goodness gracious, *what* a muss!

ARTHUR GUITERMAN.

A rare old bird is the pelican,
 His beak holds more than his belican.
 He can take in his beak
 Enough food for a week.
 I'm darned if I know how the helican!

DIXON MERRITT.*

Rebecca, a silly young wench,
 Went out on the Thames to catch tench.
 When the boatload upset,
 She exclaimed, I regret—
 The word for a lady, in French!

G. HERBERT THRING.†



* Mr. Charles H. Mandy, of Alabama, who sends this example, by a leading American journalist who at one time was President of the American Association of Humorists, writes:—"As the pelican is plentiful on the Gulf Coast, Louisiana is familiarly known as the Pelican State. This Limerick appears on many of the souvenirs of New Orleans, and other coast cities."

† The popular secretary of the Authors' Society (London).

There was a young lady of Zenda,
 Whose language was loving and tender.
 She said to her beau,
 " Down to Richmond we'll go,
 And we'll dine at the Star and—Suspender."

SEYMOUR HICKS.*

There once was a tutor named Horne,
 Who treated the students with scorn.
 Said he, " Now look here
 Do this sum about beer
 Or I'll pluck you as sure as you're born."†

An impossible person of Pisa
 Vowed he'd marry the fair Mona Lisa ;
 When told she was dead,
 He went clean off his head,
 And exclaimed: "I appeal unto Cæsar."

DR. J. WARSHAW.

There was an old sheikh of Timbuctoo,
 Whom it's no use wishing good luck to ;
 For a crocodile's teeth
 Grabbed his pants from beneath—
 And what that brute collared he stuck to !

DR. J. WARSHAW.



* This effort by the versatile playwright and actor is hardly calculated to make Sir Anthony Hope, though quite enough to have made the late Sir H. Rider Haggard.

† This is included because of its "historical" value. The author of this work received it from the Rev. R. Bruce Dickson (who was in Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1861-5), who writes:—" Benjamin Horne, Fellow of St. John's, Cambridge, with a reputation for loving beer, examined for the 'Littlego' about 1862, and in the Arithmetic paper set this:—' An undergraduate, by going out without cap and gown, got beer a penny a pint cheaper ; at last he was caught and found he had saved just enough to pay the Proctor's fine (6/3). How many quarts did he have ? ' "

CHAPTER SEVEN

Limericritical Reviews

A New Idea in Literary Criticism

BY THE AUTHOR

There was a young man of Bow Bells,
Who sought to find out where Truth dwells.
Exclaimed he, "Oh, jigger !
I wish I could figure
If she lives, or lies buried in Wells !"

There was a young woman whose jaw
Was as strong as a circular saw.
She'd the Blarney Stone kissed,
And so could not desist
From pulling folks' legs to B. Shaw.

Said a stern-faced young man, "It is plain
That Life is a permanent pain,
Devoid of all mirth,
From the day of our birth—
All sorrow, all scourging—Hall Caine !"

There was a maid fair to the sight,
So stately, so pure—so—so White.
Being too good to live,
Fate, Corelli-tive,
Made her poison herself in the night.

A strong silent man on a ranch
Thrashed a beautiful girl with a branch.
Cried she, " You are Hellish !
But deliciously Dellish,
So take my affection, carte-blanche ! "



There was a sweet maiden sublime,
So elegant—so Oppenheim.
Ev'ry maître d'hôtel
She knew awf'ly well,
And at feeding spent most of her time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Tongue-Twisting Limerick

In a 'bus queue a Jueue, bound for Kueue,
Thus was hailed by a Scot whom he knueue :
 “ Dinna fash yoursel’, Lueue,
 I’m paying for yueue ! ”
And the fueue who o’erheard whistled “ P-h-u-e-u-e ! ”

A charming young lady named Psyche,
Was heard to ejaculate, “ Pcryche ! ”
 For, when riding her pbych,
 She ran over a ptych,
And fell on some rails that were ppsyche.

There was a young fellow of Gloucester,
Whose wife ran away with a couester.
 He traced her to Leicester,
 And tried to arreicester,
But in spite of his efforts he louchester.*

A bald-headed judge called Beauclerk,
Fell in love with a maiden seau ferk
 Residing at Bicester,
 Who said when he kicester,
“ I won’t wed a man with neau herk.”



* The above originally appeared in the “ Under the Clock ” column in the *Daily News*.

A young lady sings in our choir,
Whose hair is the colour of phoir,
But her charm is unique,
She has such a fair chique,
It is really a joy to be nhoir.

Whenever she looks down the aisle
She gives me a beautiful smaisle,
And of all of her beaux,
I am certain she sheaux
She likes me the best all the whaisle.

Last Sunday she wore a new sacque
Cut low at the front and the bacque,
And a lovely bouquet
Which she wore in a wuet
That very few girls have the knacque.

Some day, ere she grows too antique,
In marriage her hand I shall sique ;
If she's not a coquette,
Which I'd greatly regruette,
She shall share my two guineas a wique.

A young sport of Baluchistan,
Was invited to tell whuchistAnn,
He gave a wink,
And said, " I think
I will not tell who yuchistAnn."

Said a cautious young fellow named Beebee,
 Engaged to a nice girl named Phœbe ;
 " I really must see
 What the clerical fee
 Be before Phœbe be Phœbe Beebee. "

A young lady from Wilmington, Delaware,
 Of the high cost of living was welaware,
 Said she, " I suppose
 I can save on my clothes,
 I don't care a whoop what the helaware ! "

There was an old man called Zerubbabel
 Who swallowed a small india-rubber ball ;
 But the rubber-ball burst,
 And Zerubbabel cursed,
 His language was quite indescribbabel !

A boastful young person, named St. John,
 Went to fight the American it. John.
 He returned with a scare
 And the loss of his hair,
 And a manner decidedly crt. John.

IRWIN LAUGHLIN.*

There was a young man of St. Lawrence,
 Who held several things in abhawrence,
 Such as underdone eggs,
 Tomcats with three legs,
 And persons who served him with wawrence.

JULIAN S. HUXLEY.



* In sending this clever Limerick to the compiler of this work, in January, 1925, Mr. Laughlin, who is U.S. Minister to Greece, explained that he wrote it when a schoolboy.

An indolent youth went to Lympne*
And attended the Church for a whympe :
 He woke from a slumber
 In time for the number
The clergyman chose for the hympne.

HARRY R. LEWIS.

There once was a policeman of Dunstable,
Whose manners on duty were unstable.
 He'd go on his beat
 With no shoes to his feet,
That unstable Dunstable constable.

A student of Hist'ry, named Cockburn,
The car took one ev'ning to Hockburn, †
 Where he lectured to lots
 Of unconvinced Scots
That " Bannockburn " should be " Bannockburn." CHARLES W. HOWARD.

There was a young girl in the choir,
Whose voice it rose hoir and hoir,
Till it reached such a height
It escaped from her, queight.
They found it next day in the spoir.

A. B. J. ("Referee," 8.5.04.)

There was a young fellow of Beaulieu,
Who loved a fair maiden most treaulieu.
 He said, "Do be mine,"
 And she didn't decline,
So the wedding was solemnized deaulieu.

* Pronounced "Lim."

[†] Holborn, of course.

There was a young lady of Warwick,
 Who lived in a castle histarwick,
 On the damp castle mould
 She contracted a could,
 And the doctor prescribed paregarwick.

There was a young woman of Welwyn
 Loved a barman who served in the " Belwyn."
 But the " Belwyn," oh, dear !
 Had a welwyn in the rear ;
 So they never got wed, for they felwyn.

There was a young fellow named Fisher,
 Who was fishing for fish in a fissure,
 When a cod with a grin
 Pulled the fisherman in,
 Now they're fishing the fissure for Fisher.

Our new parlour-maid is a buster ;
 She dusted a bust with a duster,
 The bust is now dust,
 For in dusting—it bust.
 Had we not been kind we'd have " custer."

F. A. JUPE.

A girl who weighs many an Oz.
 Used language I will not pronoz. ;
 Her brother, one day,
 Pulled her chair right away ;
 He wanted to see if she'd boz.

P. L. MANNOCK.

He weighed thirty stone and some lbs.,
He'd the cheek to try riding to hbs.;

Said the master, " 'Tis queer
Such as he should come hueer;
His impertinence passes all bbs."

H. P. H. ("Referee," 1904).

When you think of the hosts without No.
Who are slain by the deadly cuco.,
It's quite a mistake
Of such food to partake,
It results in a permanent slo.

A small boy who lived in Iquique
Had a voice irritatingly squique;
When his father said, "Oil it,
My son, or you'll spoil it,"
His retort was a trifle too chique.

There was a professor of Caius
Who measured six feet round the knaius;
He went down to Harwich
Nineteen in a carwich,
And found it a terrible squaius.

There was a young maid of Aberystwyth,
Who took corn to the mill to make grystwyth,
The miller, named Jack,
With a pat on her back,
Pressed his own to the lips that she kystwyth.

There was a young curate of Salisbury
 Whose manners were quite halisbury-scalisbury.
 He would wander round Hampshire
 Without any pampshire,
 Till the Vicar compelled him to walisbury.*

An obstinate lady of Leicester
 Wouldn't marry her swain, though he preicester.
 For his income, I fear,
 Was a hundred a year,
 On which he could never have dreicester !

There was a young lady of Slough,
 Who went for a ride on a cough.
 The brute pitched her off
 When she started to coff ;
 She ne'er rides on such animals nough.

L. R.

A fellow who lisped went to Merthyr,
 To woo a young lady named Berthyr.
 He asked, " Have you been kitht ? "
 But when she said, " Dethitht ! "
 He murmured, " She's false to me ; curthyr ! "

An unskhylful rider from Rhyl
 Motor-cycled full-speed down a hyll,
 Thyll a sphyll at a bend
 Khyld our whylful young friend,
 And he now in the churchyard lies sthyll !



* This well-known Limerick makes fun of the fact that the old-fashioned rendering of Salisbury was " Sarum " and that even to-day it is of local significance. Hampshire is nearly always called " Hants. "

A Canadian canner, so canny,
 Can cantillate thus to his granny :
 “ A canner can can
 All a canner can can,
 But a canner can’t can a can, can he ? ”

An eccentric old lady of Rhyl
 Wrote a very queer clause in her whyl.
 It read, “ To the Mayor
 I bequeath my false hayor,
 There’s enough a nice cushion to fhyl.”

There was an old lady of Bicester,
 Who vowed that no man had e’er kissed her.
 But her chin and her nose
 Grew together so close
 That if any man tried he’d have missed her !

A right-handed fellow named Wright,
 In writing “ write ” always wrote “ rite ”
 Where he meant to write right.
 If he’d written “ write ” right,
 Wright would not have wrought rot writing “ rite.”

A lady, an expert on skis,
 Went out with a man who said, “ Plis,
 On the next precipice
 Will you give me a kice ? ”
 She said, “ Quick ! before somebody sis.”

SYDNEY W. TOMS.*



* Who for sixteen years, until he retired in 1921, was the popular organist and choirmaster of St. James’s Church, Piccadilly, London.

There was an Arabian Sheik,
Who entered his harem and speik :
 “ A loud cry I heard,
 In here it occurred,
Are my fifty-two children aweik ? ”

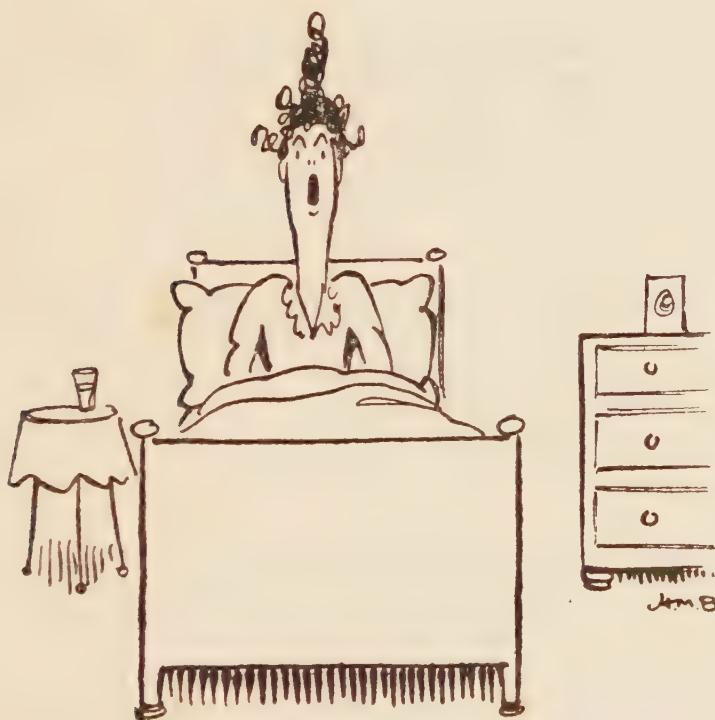
Said the Chancellor of Britain's Exchequer,
" This income tax surely will wrequer ;
Whatever I budget,
Why, someone will grudge it,
So I'll send surplus profit to Mequer."

A pretty young schoolmistress named Beauchamp,
Said, "These awful boys how shall I teauchamp ?
For they will not behave,
Although I look grave,
And with tears in my eyes I beseauchamp."

A charming young lady called Geoghegan,
(Whose Christian names are less peophegan)
Will be Mrs. Knollys
Very soon at All Ksolllys' ;
But the date is at present a veogheg'un.
MAJOR C. K. PHILLIPS ("Punch," 1904).

There was an old fellow named Cholmondeley
(pronounced "Chumley"),
Who sat in his office so dolmondeley,
Till someone came by
And said, " Why do you sigh
So holmondeley, so molmondeley, so glolmondeley ? "

Some charming selections from Strauss
A pianist played at our hauss ;
Though we shouted " Encore ! "
And clamoured for more,
The neighbours did nothing but grauss.



There was a young lady named Wemyss,
Who, it semyss, was troubled with dremyss.
She would wake in the night
And, in terrible fright,
Shake the bemyss of the house with her scremyss.

A peculiar Poperinghe pedagogue
 Said a dead dog could not be a deader dog.
 But his pupils got mad
 At the ideas he had,
 And wished they could hit on his head a log.

A writer who worshipped Nijinski
 Was prepared to think ill of Ptasszynsky.
 But with pleasure he cried
 When her tights he espied :
 “ By Jove ! she is quite in the pinsky ! ”

There was a young lady named Sheila,
 Who “ led out ” the king as a feila,
 When she saw her faux pas
 (For it didn’t gaux fas),
 She put out her tongue at the deila !

Said a constable stern, on his beat,
 To a couple more fond than discreet :
 “ Though a Miss miss a kiss,
 Give the next kiss a ‘ miss,’
 For a kiss is amiss in the street.”

There was an old dame of Dunbar,
 Who took the 4.4 to Forfar,
 But went on to Dundee,
 So she travelled, you see,
 Too far by 4.4 from Forfar.

There was a young lady of Crewe
Who wanted to catch the 2.2.
Said a porter, "Don't worry,
Or flurry, or scurry,
It's a minute or 2 2 2.2."

BISHOP H. T. Foss (Anglican Bishop of Osaka,
Japan).

There was a young fellow named Tait
Who dined with his girl at 8.8,
But I hate to relate
What that fellow named Tait
And his tête-à-tête ate at 8.8.

CAROLYN WELLS.

There once was a bonnie Scotch laddie,
Who said as he put on his plaidie :
"I've just had a dish
O' unco' guid fish."
What had 'e had, had 'e had haddie ?

The bottle of perfume that Willie sent
Was highly displeasing to Millicent ;
Her thanks were so cold
They quarrelled, I'm told,
Through that silly scent Willie sent Millicent.

When the war was concluded in Hanover,
The Allies had exactly one man over.
But their object was gained,
Not one German remained :
So that man overran over Hanover.

A fly and a flea in a flue
 Were imprisoned, so what could they do ?
 Said the fly, " Let us flee ! "
 " Let us fly ! " said the flea.
 So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

A sawyer named Esau, from Dee,
 Saw a couple see-sawing ; said he
 To his girl, " Let us see-saw ! "
 Said she, " Oh no, Esau !
 See-sawing is vulgar. See ! See ! "

EDWARD MILLIGAN.

One day I went out to the Zoo,
 For I wanted to see the old Gnu,
 But the old Gnu was dead,
 They'd a new Gnu instead,
 And that Gnu, well he knew he was new.

G. T. JOHNSON.

There once was a diarist named Pepys,
 Who wrote about London in hephys ;
 When the Fire had died down
 Pepys went about town
 And culled tales that give one the creyps.

HUGH POWELL.

An heiress of Abergavenny
 Had offers of marriage, full mavenny.
 She surveyed all the men
 Very gravely, and then
 Said, " Thank you, I am not taking avenny."

There was a mechalnwick of Alnwick,
 Whose opinions were anti-Germalnwick ;
 So when war had begun,
 He went off with a gun
 The proportions of which were Titalnwick.

There was a young servant of Drogheda,
 Whose mistress had deeply annogheda,
 She proceeded to swear
 In language so rare
 That afterwards no one emplogheda.

P. L. MANNOCK.

Said a man to his wife, down in Sydenham,
 " My best trousers—where have you hydenham ?
 It is perfectly true
 That they weren't very new,
 But I foolishly left half-a-quydenham."

P. L. MANNOCK.

I know an old man of Durazzo,
 I've never known anyone chazzo.
 From the time he's begun
 Till the moment he's done
 I can only say, " Really, is thazzo ? "

A rather polite man of Hawarden,
 When taking a walk in his gawarden,
 If he trod on a slug,
 A worm, or a bug,
 Would say, " My dear friend, I beg pawarden."

A jealous young man of High Wycombe
 Had rivals in love and he'd kycombe ;
 That is, if he could,
 But if six feet they stood
 He'd hire a big navvy to lycombe.

E. P. ("Referee," 1904).

There was a young fellow of Magdalen,
 Whose tutor accused him of dagdalen,
 And pledging his credit :
 He wouldn't have said it
 Had the youth been a peer or a lagdalen.

Said a lively young nurse out in Padua
 To her master, " Please, sir, you're a dadua.
 I've come down for some pins
 For to wrap up the twins,
 And to hear you remark, sir, how gladua."

There once was a choleric colonel,
 Whose oaths were obscene and infolonet,
 And the Chaplain, aghast,
 Gave up protest at last,
 But wrote them all down in his jolonel.

E. MUIRHEAD LITTLE.

The lifeboat that's kept at Torquay
 Is intended to float in the suay.
 The crew and the coxswain
 Are sturdy as oxswain,
 And as smart and as brave as can buay.

A. P. TROTTER (1904).

CHAPTER NINE

Nan of Nantucket

There was once a man from Nantucket*
Who kept all his cash in a bucket,
But his daughter, named Nan,
Ran away with a man,
And as for the bucket, Nantucket.

(" Princeton Tiger ").

But he followed the pair to Pawtucket—
The man and the girl with the bucket ;
And he said to the man
He was welcome to Nan,
But as for the bucket, Pawtucket.

(" Chicago Tribune ").

Then the pair followed Pa to Manhasset,
Where he still held the cash as an asset ;
But Nan and the man
Stole the money and ran,
And as for the bucket, Manhasset.

(" New York Press ").



* This delightful series was commenced by an unknown student at Princeton whose effort appeared in the College journal, "The Princeton Tiger." The story was carried on by various famous newspapers until it developed into a Limerickal " serial " of ten " episodes." The editor regrets to notice, however, that the villain contrived to escape punishment for his fell deeds, and has ventured, therefore, to repair this injustice by drastically disposing of him in London ! He hopes his American friends will forgive him. In the case of two of the verses in the series he his unable to trace the names of the journals in which they originally appeared.

The pair then went on to Natick,
 Where the man thought he might turn a trick ;
 They had nothing to pawn,
 As the bucket was gone,
 And the people would give them Natick.

(“ Boston Transcript ”).

Pa’s wife joined the party at Limá,
 So glum she appeared, they said, “ Fie, ma ! ”
 But she raved, “ You well know
 That the bucket of dough
 Is mine.” Nan exclaimed, “ How you Lima ! ”

(“ New York Sun ”).

So they beat their way up to Woonsocket,
 Where the judge found their names on the docket ;
 When ’twas over, the man
 Remarked sadly to Nan :
 “ Gee ! Didn’t the legal Woonsocket ! ”

(“ Chicago Record-Herald ”).

But they came to the river, Shetucket,
 And they still had the cash in the bucket ;
 ’Twas a sad, sad affair :
 Nan left the man there,
 And as for the bucket, Shetucket.

(“ New Haven Register ”).

Pa followed Nan, next, to Jamaica,
 Where a copper did soon overtake her.
 “ Where’s the bucket ? ” he cried.
 “ Won’t tell,” Nan replied.
 Then Pa shouted, “ Judge, won’t Jamaica ? ”

With Nan's cash Pa lit out for Miami,
But in jail he remarked, "Now where am I?"
Nan said, with a jeer :
" You're in jail, Pa, I fear."
And Pa sadly replied, " Oh Miami!"

Nan's bucket was really a sack
And she bundled it into a hack ;
Pa weeps—good old man—
For a far-away Nan.
Her address now is : Nan, Hackensack.

(“New York Sun”).

The tale was completed in London,
Where the bucket's purloiner was undone.
For the rascal who tucket,
Himself—"kicked the bucket."
Verdict—"Felo-de-se,"—with a gun done.

L. R.

CHAPTER TEN

A Tale of Tragedy

By Mary Kernahan

There was an old person who cried ;
He was so exceedingly wide,
When they took him to church
He was left in the lurch,
For he could not get in, though he tried.

So the whole congregation, politely,
Adjourned to his house Sunday-nightly ;
The choir-boys in pairs
Arranged on the stairs,
Where they fitted exceedingly tightly.

The clerk asked to sit in the fender,
As his bronchial organs were tender.
“ If I don’t get the cramp here,
There’s no fear of damp here,”
He said. “ It’s as well I am slender.”

The remainder, three hundred or more,
Sat five on each chair he’d in store.
The rest of those present,
With smiles truly pleasant,
Took turns to sit down on the floor.

The organ, with laudable care,
Skilled workmen let down through the air ;
And, finding it big,
Brought it down in a gig,
Wrapped up in a Bath wicker chair.



The organist, kind to the core,
Merely smiled when it stuck in the door.
He asked for a chair ; he
Reckoned it was airy,
And could not, for exit, suit more.

* * * *

But, alas!—as so often you find—
Such goodness and kindness combined,
 Most sad to relate,
 Ended just as I state :
It unhinged the old gentleman's mind.

When twenty-five Sundays were o'er,
He heavily fell to the floor,
 And remarked, with a sob
 (And his head on a knob),
“I really can't stand any more ! ”

* * * * *

For years, he was closely confined :
Then they deemed it but folly to bind
 A lunatic quite.
 He's become—so they write—
A Cubist ; the very worst kind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Limericks and Love

FLIRTATION

A corpulent spinster of Crewe
Met a bow-legged beau whom she knew ;
As they sat in the Park,
She said, after dark,
“ I wish you were bow-armed, dear, too ! ”

R. DAVIS.

There was a young warrior of Parma,
Who lovingly fondled his charmer,
Said the maiden demure,
“ You’ll excuse me, I’m sure,
But I wish you would take off your armour.”

ADORATION

Said a fair-haired young Jewess of Klondyke,
“ Of you I’m exceedingly fond, Ike ;
To prove I adore you,
I’ll dye, darling, for you,
And be a brunette, not a blonde, Ike.”

INFATUATION

There was a young man of the West,
Who loved a fair maiden with zest,
So hard did he press her
To make her say, “ Yes, sir,”
He broke four cigars in his vest.

There was a young girl of Navarre,
 Who was very much " gone " on a tar,
 When she swam with him, over
 From Calais to Dover,
 Her friends said, " That's going too far."

COMPENSATION

There was a young lady of Eton,
 Whose figure had plenty of meat on,
 She said, " Marry me, Jack,
 And you'll find that my back
 Is a nice place to warm your cold feet on."

A homely young heiress of Beccles
 Was covered with thousands of freckles.
 Said the man of her choice,
 In a grief-stricken voice,
 " I'd gang awa' but for the shekels."

OSCULATION

There was a young woman of Florence,
 Who for kissing professed great abhorrence,
 But when she'd been kissed,
 And found what she'd missed,
 She cried till the tears flowed in torrents.

There was a young man of Madrid,
 Who kissed a girl on the eyelid.
 Said she to the lad,
 " Your aim's very bad,
 You should practise awhile." So he did !

ANNEXATION

There was an old maid of Vancouver,
Who captured a man by manœuvre,
She jumped on his knee,
With a chortle of glee,
And nothing on earth could remove her.

REFUTATION

There was a young lady of Plumbley,
Who spent her time firmly but dumbly
Rejecting the suit
Of a deaf and dumb mute,
Who proposed to her finger-and-thumbly.

COL. C. M. ABERCROMBIE, C.M.G.

There was a young typist of Oldham,
Promised wife to the boss—so she told 'em ;
But that bad man replied
He had sampled one bride
Whom he'd sell—if he knew where they sold 'em.

DESPERATION

A middle-aged dame of Nebraska
Fell in love and eloped with a Lascar.
Her friends said, " 'Twas naughty."
But then she was forty,
So she took whosoever would ask her.

PRESERVATION

There was an old lady of Nottingham,
Love letters with tears she was blotting 'em,
A thousand she picked
To be published, in strict
Alphabetical order allotting 'em.

PRECIPITATION

There was a young man of New York,
 Whose pa made a fortune in pork ;
 Last Sunday, at three,
 He was married to me.
 Next month we're expecting the stork.

AMALGAMATION

There was a young maid of Japan,
 Who married a Hottentot man.
 The lady was yellow,
 And he a black fellow,
 The children were all black and tan.

LAMENTATION

There was a young lady of Condover,
 Whose husband soon ceased to be fond of her ;
 He could not forget
 He had wooed a brunette,
 But peroxide had now made a blonde of her.

DETERIORATION

There was an old woman of Churston,
 Who thought her third husband the worst 'un,
 For he justly was reckoned
 Far worse than her second,
 And the second was worse than the first 'un.

DAMNATION !

An old fellow of Abingdon Hammer,
 With a wife who henpecked, and a stammer,
 Said, " My w-w-w-wife
 Is the c-curse of my life,
 D-d-d-d-d-d-d-n her ! "

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Irony of Fate; or, Why She was Jilted

A LINERICK DRAMA IN TEN SPASMS

By the Author

Oh, list to the dolorous tale
Of unfortunate, fair Abigail,
A centipede sweet,
Engaged to discreet
Young Horace, a prosperous snail.

And everyone said, *re* the news,
“ What a sensible girl so to choose !
He’s a house of his own,
Freehold, and is known
To be steady—and never to boose.”

The morn of the marriage arrived,
By an effort the Bridegroom contrived
At the church, to be there
With ten minutes to spare,
In his laudable haste to be wived.

His “ best man ” was Sidney, the spider,
An excellent fellow as guider,
In four pairs of new pants,
With a bunch of choice plants
For the bride, a bouquet to provide her.

But, alack and alas!—Where's the bride?
 Is she ill? Is she shy? Does she hide?
 Thus queried the guests
 When, in spite of all quests,
 No sign of Miss C. could be spied.

Till, at length, Mr. Spider departed,
 By request of the groom, broken-hearted,
 To charter a fly
 And elucidate why
 She tarried, and if she had started.

When Sidney drove up to her dwelling,
 He heard a lugubrious yelling.
 And this was the reason
 For such seeming treason,
 And the tears Abigail was expelling:

The delay in fulfilling her bond
 Was because, up till now, she had donned
 But forty-four shoes
 Of her hundred small "twos,"
 No wonder her heart did despond!

When the groom heard the news, loudly sniffed he,
 "The wedding is off, I'm too thrifty
 To give my life's care
 To a partner who'll wear
 Not one pair of shoes, sir, but fifty!"

Ere I finish this tragic recital,
There's a point to explain, which is vital :
 The bride, Fate did balk,
 Was Irish, from Cork ;
You'll now see the sense of my title.

(The remaining Limericks in this chapter are all by the
Author.)

A bad-tempered bully of Thurso
Was muzzled because he would curse so.
 But the signs that resulted
 Everyone so insulted,
They cried out, "Ungag him, he's worse so ! "

A canny Scotch lad of Pitlochry
Kissed an up-to-date girl in a rock'ry,
 When he tasted the paint
 He cried, "Lassie, this ain't
A real kiss at all, it's a mock'ry ! "

There was an old man of Tobago,
Whose Limerick jokes did too far go ;
 Till a kick on the seat
 Made him much more discreet ;
He wonders now, "When will the scar go ? "

There was an old fellow of Clewer,
Whose wife was as thin as a skewer ;
 Last night, sad to say,
 She, at eight, "passed away"
Through the bars of a drain to the sewer.

An optimist living at Datchet
Attempted to shave with a hatchet.
When his nose he did sever,
He said, "Now I'll never
Have nasal catarrh—I can't catch it."

Said a sensitive poet of Peel,
"I've seen that revue a great deal ;
Though the words are 'low-brow,'
There's plenty, I trow,
Of fine elegy (L-e-g) to appeal ! "

There was an old lady of Leith,
Who had most remarkable teeth ;
They were not very strong,
But so spiky and long
That she had to keep each in a sheath !

There was a young lady of Harwich,
Who behaved very bad at her marwich ;
She proceeded on skates
To the Parish Church gates,
While her friends followed on in the carwich.

There was an old man of Bombay,
Who stood on his head all the day
In the main thoroughfare,
With his legs in the air,
Soliciting alms by the way.

An old vivisector, who'd died,
 At the portals of Heaven applied.
 Said St. Peter, " Your cheek
 Is really unique.
 Go to Hades ! " and kicked him outside.



There was an old person of Florida,
 Whose conduct could not have been horrider,
 At his hotel, the waiters
 He pelted with " taters,"
 And the chambermaids kissed in the corridor.*



* Admittedly this is a very ordinary specimen, but it may serve as an example of emergency rhyming, for the reason that it was perpetrated at a supper party at which the author was challenged to make an impromptu Limerick upon the " difficult " word Florida.

An ambitious young actor of Lee
Was anxious a film "star" to be,
So he dived, for a "stunt,"
Clad in mail from a punt.
The fun'ral's on Friday at three.

To London there came, from Corea,
A man with a great big left ear,
As a blanket at night
It was valuable, quite,
But in a packed Tube train—oh, dear !

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Best Limerick of All

(*Opinions expressed as the result of an inquiry by the Author*)

DEAN INGE :

There was an old man of Khartoum,
Who kept two black sheep in his room.
“ They remind me,” he said,
“ Of two friends who are dead.”
But he never would tell us of whom.

REV. B. G. BOURCHIER (the popular Vicar of Hampstead Garden Suburb) :

There was an old man of Khartoum,
Who kept a baboon in his room.
“ It reminds me,” he said,
“ Of a friend who is dead.”
But he never would tell us of whom.*



* There are a number of versions of the Khartoum Limerick, but the author believes the one quoted by Dean Inge to be the correct one. However, Father Ronald Knox claims the following to be the original version :—

There was an old man of Khartoum,
Who kept two tame sheep in a room ;
He said, “ They remind me
Of one left behind me,
But I cannot remember of whom.”

“ Surely,” writes Father Knox, “ no one can doubt that the Dean’s is a corrected and rationalized version of the form in which I quote it, which is

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT :

There was a young plumber of Leigh.*

MR. J. ST. LOE STRACHEY :

There was a young man of Cadiz,
Who inferred that life is what it is,
For he early had learnt,
If it were what it weren't,
It could not be that which it is.



(Continued from page 115.)

obviously the original. The ‘one’ has been corrected to ‘two’ because there were two sheep; ‘remember’ is corrected to ‘tell us’ because that makes better sense—but the Limerick is primarily a vehicle of nonsense. The corrected version has spoiled the meaning.”

The author suspects that Father Knox is desirous of indulging in a little “leg-pulling.” Obviously the Limerick is, primarily, a vehicle of nonsense, but surely it must be sensible nonsense, or, if he prefers it, nonsensical sense. The idea of the Khartoum patriarch dispensing hospitality to a couple of sable sheep because they reminded him of two friends who had preceded him to the Garden of Allah—or probably, since the baa-lambs were black, to regions more infernal—is, surely, the very quintessence of nonsensical whimsicality and, in its own sphere, is as logical and understandable as Lewis Carroll’s story of “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” The humour of this would surely have failed if the odd pair, instead of playing their “confidence” trick by the seashore upon a colony of oysters, had so gone “outside the picture” as to have discovered a troop of reindeer there and made them the victims of their gluttony. If it be right to make the Limerick discard its own “logic,” why not make the Khartoum Limerick still more irrational than the version Father Knox favours? Thus:—

There was an old man of Khartoum,
Who kept a pink sheep in his room.
Said he, “They recall
The ivy-clad wall
Where I first kissed my wife in the gloom.”

* Mr. Arnold Bennett, in giving this opinion, writes:—“Unfortunately I am precluded from putting this *chef d'œuvre* upon record for the reason that it is unprintable.”

FATHER RONALD KNOX (who is the author of the translations) :

There was a young man of Devizes,
 Whose ears were of different sizes ;
 The one that was small
 Was of no use at all,
 But the other took twenty " first " prizes.

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL.



Visas erat : huic geminarum
 Dispar modus auricularum :
 Minor haec nihili ;
 Palma triplici
 Jam fecerat altera clarum.*

* * * *

* Who knows but that this may also be an incorrect correctly-corrected

MAJOR IAN HAY :

There was an old man of Nantucket.

(See Chapter IX.)

MR. COULSON KERNAHAN :

"A Tale of Tragedy" (see Chapter X).

MR. GORDON SELFRIDGE :

There was a young maid of Ostend,
Who swore she'd hold out to the end ;
But alas ! half-way over
'Twixt Calais and Dover,
She did what she didn't intend.*



(Continued from page 117.)

version ? In fact, the author has an idea that, as originally compiled, it may have read like this :—

There is a young man of Devizes,
Whose ears are of different sizes.
One is as wee
As that of a flea,
The other twelve acres comprises.

Father Knox is as conservative with regard to the translations of Limericks as he is about safeguarding the words of the originals. "What I complain about in the classical translations of Limericks," he writes, "is that they either use a different metre, or else, as in the case of your Riga one (see Chapter XVIII), scan by accent, instead of scanning by quantity in the classical manner. However, it can be done. Look at these versions which I have made up already this morning, and it is only ten o'clock."

Κλυτὸς ἦν τις ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ φίσης
ἄτων ποσοτῆτος ἀνίσης.
Τὸ μὲν οὖν δλίγον,
Τὸ δ' ἀεθλοφόρον
Νεμέας πάρα καὶ παρὰ Πίονες.

* In sending the above, Mr. Selfridge stated that he had just crossed from the Hook of Holland to Harwich, and his boat had taken twelve hours over the journey, instead of the usual five !

THE MARCHIONESS OF TOWNSHEND :

There was a young poet of Kew,
 Who failed to emerge into view.
 So he said, "I'll dispense
 With rhyme, metre, and sense."
 And he did, and he's now in "Who's Who."

(From "Punch.")

MR. WILKIE BARD :

There was a young lady of Jarrow,
 Whose mouth was exceedingly narrow.
 Though times out of number
 She chewed a cucumber,
 She never could manage a marrow.

As a beauty I am not a star,
 There are others more handsome, by far ;
 But my face—I don't mind it
 For I am behind it.
 It's the people in front get the jar !*

ANTHONY EUWER.

And finally, The World's Worst Limerick

I met a smart damsel at Copenhagen,
 With her pretty face I was very much taken.
 "What!" she said. "Turned-up trousers—a London man!
 Fall in love with a crank I never can."
 She turned up her nose and away she ran.†



* This admirable Limerick has gained world-wide fame by its authorship being credited to the late Woodrow Wilson, when it was merely his favourite Limerick. It appears in Mr. Euwer's book "Rhymes of the Valley," with a note stating that it was first printed in the Pittsburg "Index" about 1898.

† The author quotes this sublime epic exactly as it was received in a competition inaugurated by the editor of "Tit Bits," some two years ago. It may, possibly, be hailed as a masterpiece by that department of the Modernist school of poetics which affects to be independent of the rules of metre, and whose supporters, in consequence, waste much "gas" upon the subject.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Topical Limerick

Tut-Ankh-Amen, best known as old Tankh,
Was a Pharaoh of infinite rank,
 But his sarcophagus
Wouldn't cause all this fuss
If his name had been Freddie or Frank.

ELSIE RIDGEWELL.

Says the Frenchman, " You'll pay us for sure,"
Says the German, " We can't for we're poor."
 So Fritz with a whine
 Sings his " Watch on the Rhine,"
But the Poilu sings, " Watch on the Ruhr."

JOSEPH KENNEDY.

Lady Astor, M.P., for Sobriety,
Mrs. Wintringham—she's for Propriety.
 Now Berwick-on-Tweed
 With all speed has decreed
Mrs. Phillipson wins—for Variety.

A. E. HALLIDAY.

There was an old Bolshie called Trotsky,
Of the Russians he starved quite a lotsky ;
 Till a stern Soviet
 Said, " Our anger is set,
Get out ; do not walksky but Trotsky ! "

G. HERBERT THRING.

There was a young girl of St. Bride,
Who puzzled her head till she died.

When removed for X-rays,
To the doctors' amaze,
She was chequered with cross-words inside.*

REGINA MIRIAM BLOCH.

There was an old broom of St. Stephens,
That set all at sixes and sevens ;
And to sweep from the room
The convictions of Brougham
Was the work of this Broom of St. Stephens.†

In the famed Scottish castle of Glamis
(pronounced " Glarms ")
Lives an earl's lovely daughter whose chamis
Have the heart fairly won
Of our King's second son,
The fair " Lyon " well suits the Royal Amis.

LOUIS P. BERLYN.

Said I to my friend, Mrs. Lee,
" Your hubby must take you to see
The new ' insect play.'
But with scorn she said, " Nay,
The old one plays cribbage with me."

EDGAR BATEMAN.



* This was the winning Limerick composed at the impromptu competition arranged last year on the occasion of the Dinner at the Criterion Restaurant, at which the author of this book was the guest of the Poetry Club.

† This Limerick on Lord Brougham, which appeared in " Punch " in December, 1845, is a poor specimen, but is interesting as showing how the practice of making topical and political Limericks is quite an old one.

An adventurous student, from Herts,
 Was anxious to get into Bart's.
 Through a fall from a spire
 He achieved his desire,
 If not altogether—in parts!

L. R.*

An ardent young lady of fashion
 For kissing young men had a passion ;
 “ Thank Heaven ! ” she hissed
 To the victims she kissed,
 “ There's one thing Lord Rhondda can't ration ! ”

Said a whimsical Coventry Mayor
Re the “ Godiva ” Pageant affair :
 “ La Milo's the maid
 To grace our parade—
 Or parade our disgrace if she's bare.”

There was a young lady of Rye,
 Who said, with a wink of her eye,
 “ When a tunnel they bore
 From France to this shore,
 Good-bye, little basin, good-bye ! ”

Mac sailed for New York. Did he shrink it
 When he heard of its “ dryness ” ? Don't think it.
 He remarked with a smile,
 “ In a very short while
 This ship will make port—and I'll drink it ! ”



* Composed by the editor for “ St. Bartholomew's Book,” the Special Appeal Album for St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

On Monsieur Coué

This very remarkable man
Commends a most practical plan ;
 You can do what you want
 If you don't think you can't,
So don't think you can't think you can.

REV. CHARLES INGE.



There was a faith-healer of Deal
Who said, " Although pain isn't real,
 If I sit on a pin
 And it punctures my skin,
I dislike what I fancy I feel."

ARTHUR STANLEY.

The Complete Limerick Book

A singular Yankee of Wis.
 Found sleep in a hearse not amiss.
 It sounds most perverse,
 But he wished to re(hearse)
 His ride to the ne-crop-ol-is.*

L. R.

There was a young-old man named Shaw,
 Who was ordered to sun himself more.
 Said one " Barker " to another,
 " Obey me like your mother,
 Good-bye, Barker ! Don't sigh, Barker ! Au revoir ! " †

There was a young woman of Boston
 Whom all other places were lost on ;
 She had her opinions
 Concerning Virginians
 And the vessel—if any—they crossed on.

POCAHONTAS.

A solver of Cross Words from Leigh
 'Phoned his lawyer one night about three,
 " A long word for 'to sue'
 Give me, please, P.D.Q."
 But the lawyer replied, " U.B.D. ! "

A CHESHIRE VICAR.



* Prompted by an account in "The Daily News" of an eccentric inhabitant of Wisconsin, who had used a remodelled funeral hearse as his bedroom for six months.

† The editor did think of including this remarkable verse in Chapter XIII., as a rival to "The World's Worst Limerick," but as it was perpetrated by a lady his natural gallantry restrained him. He assumes that she intends to refer to the "sun cure" experiences of Mr. Shaw at Madeira last year in which Sir Herbert Barker was interested, but the "motif" of her composition is obscure. Is it possible that her triple use of the word "Barker" is intended to suggest that Mr. Shaw is occasionally too voluble?

There was a young lady of Lima,
 Who gazed—so amazed!—at our “Rima.”
 Said she, “Old Epstein’s
 On liberal lines
 When he sculptures the feminine femur!”*

AMY G. EDDISON.

A solver in Cross Words immersed,
 When baffled ne’er blasphemed nor cursed;
 But when this occurred
 Muttered, “Three-letter word—
 French for ‘Mrs.’—curtailed and reversed!”†

WALTER WILLIAMSON.

An actor, by name Cyril Maude,
 Whose comedy methods are broad,
 Has no title as yet,
 Though he knows half Debrett
 On the “free list” they come to applaud.

MARGARET HALSTAN.

Has our Government quite lost its wits
 In allotting such quarters to Fritz?
 Would it not have looked better
 While housing a Debtor
 To alter its name to “The Writs”?‡
 “BEAUMAINS” (of “The Referee”).



* The winning verse in a Limerick competition arranged by the Kensington Centre of the Poetry Society and adjudicated upon by L. R., on July 1, 1926.

† Selected, with the example above it, from some scores of Limericks on the subject, inflicted upon the author.

‡ In allusion to the Government putting a whole floor of the Ritz Hotel, London, at the disposal of the German delegates.

There was a young " feller " called Broke,
 Who was " broke " when the foxhounds he took,
 But when he was Master,
 The money flew faster
 Than he could tear cheques from his book.*

There was a young woman named Bright,
 Whose speed was much faster than light.
 She set out one day,
 In a relative way,
 And returned on the previous night.

(With apologies to PROFESSOR EINSTEIN.)

A musical Pittsburg Panjandrum
 Imported a " grosse caisse " (or grand drum).
 But sad to relate
 'Twas seized by the State,
 Being full of the best contraband rum.

Oh ! you who come here as a sitter,
 We pray you to clear up your litter,
 Your paper and scraps
 And chocolate wraps,
 Lest feeling against you be bitter.†



* The verse given above is, perhaps, the best-known example of the "personal" Limerick. It had a considerable vogue in Society sporting circles about the year 1885, and refers to the popular and prodigal Lord Willoughby de Broke (grandfather of the present peer) when he was master of the Warwickshire Hunt.

† This rather poor Limerick is inserted as a curiosity. It is affixed to the public seats at Braemar, the popular Aberdeenshire holiday resort, and is probably the only Limerick which has been used as a serious official public notice.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Limerick and Sport

Songs of an Ovalite

(With reference to the Victorious Surrey Cricket Team)

There was a young man who said, " Hobbs
Should never be tempted with lobs ;
He would knock them about
Till the bowlers gave out
And watered the pitch with their sobs."



There's no one so dreadful as Fender
For batsmen whose bodies are tender ;
He gets on their nerves
With his murderous swerves,
That insist upon death or surrender.

When people try googlies on Sandham,
You can see he will soon understand 'em.
With a laugh at their slows,
He will murmur, "Here goes,"
And over the railings will land 'em.

I am always attracted by Harrison
When arrayed in his batting caparison ;
If others look worried,
He never gets flurried,
But quite unconcernedly carries on.

All classes of bowlers have stuck at
Their efforts to dislocate Ducat ;
Their wildest tricks
He despatches for six,
Which is what they decidedly buck at.

You should never be down in the dumps
When Strudwick is guarding the stumps ;
His opponents depart
One by one at the start,
But, later, in twos and in clumps.

Like father, like son, says the fable,
And is justified clearly in Abel ;
No bowling he fears,
And his surname appears
An extremely appropriate label.

If I were tremendously rich,
 I would buy a cathedral in which
 I would build me a shrine
 Of a noble design
 And worship a statue of Hitch.

E. C. HOLT (from "Punch," July, 1920).

A Golf "Foursome"

A young lady whose surname was Binks
 Went out for a walk on the Links,
 When a young man cried, "Fore,"
 She observed, "What a bore,
 To go home 'foursome' 'tee' when there's drinks."

There was a young golfer of Troon,
 Who always played golf with a spoon.
 "It's handy," said he,
 "For the brandy, you see,
 Should anyone happen to swoon."

There was a young fellow of Rye,
 Who said, "A great golfer am I,
 Braid, Vardon and Ray
 I can beat any day,
 But, of course, that depends on the lie."

THE EARL OF DARTMOUTH.*



* The first four lines constituted the incomplete verse in a Limerick competition arranged by a London newspaper.

There was a plus-four of Calcutta,
Whose thoughts were too pungent to utter
When his wife, as he found
Ere commencing a round,
Was whisking the eggs with his putter.

A "Single" at Tennis

A handsome young fellow of Ennis
Was very effective at tennis.
The way he said "Love!"
Made each turtle-dove
Think the racquet more mighty than pen is.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Limericks for the Epicure (and Otherwise)

There was a young lady of Munich,
Whose appetite simply was unich.

“ There’s nothing like food,”
She contentedly cooed,
As she let out a tuck in her tunich.

There was a young lady, named Perkins,
Exceedingly fond of small gherkins.

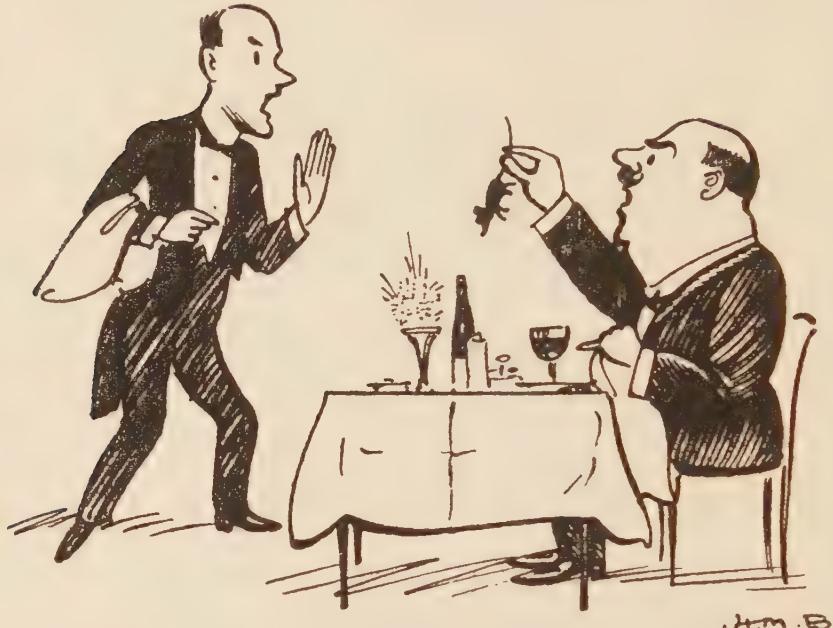
She went out to tea
And ate forty-three,
Which pickled her internal workings.

There was a young woman of Twickenham,
Of sausages never got sick on ‘em.

She knelt on the sod
And prayed to her God
To lengthen and strengthen and thicken ‘em.

There was an old man of Hawaii,
Who ate too much whale and shark paiai ;
So, quaffing the sperm-oil,
He quitted life’s turmoil
Without even saying, “ Good-baiai ! ”

An epicure, dining at Crewe,
 Found quite a large mouse in his stew.
 Said the waiter, "Don't shout,
 And wave it about,
 Or the rest will be wanting one, too!"



There was a young lady, named Maud,
 Who was a contemptible fraud.
 To eat, when at table,
 She never was able,
 But when in the pantry—oh, Lord!

There was a young lady of Michigan,
 To see her I never could wish again.
 She would eat of ice-cream
 Till with pain she would scream,
 Then order another big dish again.

A chef in an hotel at Norwich
Has dropped his false teeth in the porridge ;
Though he's searched each tureen,
They're nowhere to be seen.
Will the finder please kindly acknowledge !

LESLIE M. HURD.

There was a young mother of Devonport
Fed her infant on old '47 port ;
But it drank it so fast
That the wine wouldn't last,
And the infant has sailed for a Heaven port.

There was an old woman of Filey,
Who valued old candle-ends highly ;
When no one was looking
She used them for cooking.
" It's wicked to waste," she said dryly.

There was an old man of Madrid,
Who ate sixty-five eggs for a quid.
When they asked, " Are you faint ? "
He replied, " No, I ain't,
But I don't feel as well as I did."

I sat next the Duchess at tea.
It was just as I feared it would be :
Her rumblings abdominal
Were simply phenomenal,
And everyone thought it was me !

Two gluttonous youngsters of Streatham
 Bought fifty-five doughnuts and eatham.
 The coroner said,
 " No wonder they're dead ;
 How unwise of their parents to leatham ! "

There was an old man of Connecticut,
 Whose form had a most apoplectic cut,
 His diet, in chief,
 Was sirloin of beef,
 Though of mutton he ne'er could reject a cut.

There was a young man so benighted,
 He never knew when he was slighted ;
 He went to a party,
 And ate just as hearty
 As if he'd been really invited !

There was an old fellow of Wilton
 Who was fond of a bit of good Stilton.
 After eating his fill
 He'd sit perfectly still
 And recite a long passage from Milton.

A tiger, by taste anthropophagous,
 Felt a yearning within his œsophagus ;
 He spied a fat Brahmin,
 And growled, " Where's the harm in
 A peripatetic sarcophagus ? "

Said a cannibal wretch of Mauritius,
Who liked his food young and nutritious,
 "The best dish one can try
Is cold flapper pie,
With the toes through the crust—it's delicious!"

There was once a Buff Orpington hen,
Which dined with a goose and a Wren.
 "Bless, O Lord," said the goose,
 "These gifts to Thy use,
And us to Thy service. Amen."*

There once was a man of Calcutta
Who spoke with a terrible stutter.
 At breakfast he said,
 "Give me b-b-bread
And b-b-b-b-b-butter."

An author who laid down the law,
Though fed upon lentils and straw,
 Lived in the Adelphi
 And piling up pelf, he
Was pleased with himself, to B. Shaw.

A trader, named Sandy M'Veetie,
With a cannibal king made a treaty.
 In a glass of gin-sling
 Mac toasted the king,
And then the king—toasted M'Veetie.

F. J. SMITH.



* This clever Limerick is by the late George Fletcher, an Eton and Balliol friend of Father Knox. He was killed in the Great War.

A Jew and a Scotchman, found "tight,"
Were charged by a bobby, one night.

But the judge slyly winks :
" Where's the man who stood drinks ?
He's the culprit, if I judge them right."

H. V. ABRAHAM.

There was an old man of Baroda,
Who lived upon brandy and soda ;
His passion for fizz
Was of course his own biz,
But what killed the cat was the odour !

There was a young lady of Eltham,
Who used to beg buttons and melt 'em ;
Said she, " Button soup
Is a cure for the croup,"
But owned that when swallowed you felt 'em.

Suggested Epitaphs for the Tomb of a Glutton

Erasmus Emanuel Jones
Was awfully fond of grilled bones.
After eating a score
He asked for some more,
That's why he lies under these stones.

Here lies a poor gluttonous sinner,
Than in life consid'rably thinner.
He's gone, so they tell,
Without doubt to—well—
The place where they cook the best dinner.

L. R.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Jungletown Limerick Competition

A Chapter for Children, by the Author.

I EXPECT you know what a Limerick is, for most children can recite the famous one about the young lady of Riga who smiled as she rode on a tiger—*you* know it.

Not long ago the Jungletown creatures held a grand Limerick competition in order to find out which animal, or bird, should be crowned with laurel leaves and acknowledged as the best poet in Jungletown.

“I’ll be the judge,” said the Lion, “as I’m the King of Beasts.” “If it comes to that,” exclaimed the Elephant, “I’m the Ace, and the ace is stronger than the king, you know. However, I shan’t stand in your way, old man, as I want to compete.”

And so it was agreed.

The Elephant, the Camel, the Pelican and the Pony were the first four to compete, and their efforts were as follows :—

Said an elephant travelling by train,
“They tell me my trunk must remain
In the guard’s van. I cavil
At this, and my travel
Henceforth will be by aeroplane.”

A comical camel, named Bert,
When asked *re* his hump, did assert :
“Just as a tight boot
Causes corns on the foot,
So my back-corn is through a tight shirt.”

Said a crow to a pelican, " Grant
 Me the loan of your bill, for my aunt
 Has asked me to tea."
 Said the other, " Not me;
 Ask my brother, Ben, this pelican't ! "

A pony, renowned for his sauce,
 To his doctor said, " I must, perforce,
 From your bill take half off,
 For you've not cured my cough,
 I still remain a—little horse."

Then the Hippopotamus cleared his throat and, puffing out his chest, recited the following :—

There once was an intelligent hippopotamus,
 Who said, " Surely the lion is the most beautiful
 And cleverest and bravest
 And strongest and nicest
 Animal in all the world ! "

After the Hippopotamus had finished there was a dead silence for a few moments, and then the Camel called out :—

" That's the rottenest Limerick I've ever heard. It doesn't even rhyme, so it can't be verse."

" You mean it can't be worse," said the Elephant.

" Well, you see, I couldn't find a rhyme to my name," explained the Hippopotamus, meekly, " so I thought I'd better write my Limerick in blank verse."

" I've certainly never heard any blanker," remarked the Pony.

At this point the Lion jumped to his feet. "Silence!" he called. "You're all very ready to sneer at Mr. Hippo, but he is the only true poet among you. His verse is so full of truth, and is so elegantly worded, that it would be a waste of time for me to hear anyone else. I select him as the winner."

And so saying, the Lion went to Mr. Hippo, and, embracing him warmly, put the laurel wreath round his head, where it hung down over one eye and looked very ridiculous.

I feel quite sure you would not have been taken in by such flattery and would have awarded the prize for merit only. But then, you see, you are a human child and not a lion, and it does make a difference, doesn't it?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Some Old Favourites*

There was an old man of Tobago,
Long lived on rice, gruel, and sago,
Till one day, to his bliss,
His physician said this—
“ To a leg of roast mutton you may go.”†

There was an old woman of Norwich,
Who lives upon nothing but porridge !
Parading the town,
She turned cloak into gown ;
This thrifty old woman of Norwich.

There was an old woman of Leèds,
Who spent all her time in good deeds ;
She worked for the poor
Till her fingers were sore ;
This pious old woman of Leeds !



* The title of this chapter, and that of the next, are intended to be applied in a very broad sense. Some of the Limericks quoted as “ Old Favourites ” will no doubt be new to many readers, while it is possible that several which are given in the next chapter will be recognized as examples which are more or less popular. It is manifestly impossible to draw the strict line of limitation, and so the author has arranged the two classifications according to his own experience.

† The Tobago Limerick and the two verses following are undoubtedly the oldest Limericks in existence. They are quoted in James Orchard Halliwell’s classic work, “ The Nursery Rhymes of England ” (1842), in the preface

There was an old soldier of Bister
Went walking one day with his sister ;
 When a cow at one poke
 Tossed her into an oak
Before the old gentleman missed her.

There was an old lady of Russia,
Who, during a journey to Prussia,
 Sat all day on her box,
 Which had ninety-three locks,
For fear it should fall down and crush her.

There was an old man of Blackheath,
Who sat on his set of false teeth.
 Said he, with a start,
 “ O Lord, bless my heart !
I've bitten myself underneath ! ”



of which he says, with reference to the verses in his collection, generally : “ We can ascertain that they have been current in the nurseries for nearly two centuries,” which in these days would make them about 270 years old ! In a later edition he declares that he has included no rhymes which were not current in the eighteenth century, or prior to that. This ensures a “ past ” of at least two and a quarter centuries for the three Limericks in question, but the probability is that they were current in the gay days of the Stuarts and are the “ respectable ” survivors of a collection which was mostly “ unprintable ” !

The Tobago Limerick is quoted in a curious article which appeared in “ Punch ” in December, 1845, which “ laments that our old friends ‘ The Man of Tobago ’ and ‘ The Soldier of Bister ’ have been excluded from the schoolroom to make room for an entirely new class of picture-book containing short-rhymed lessons in history, taste, and morality, calculated to amuse as well as instruct the Royal Infant.” The suggestion that the early childhood of the late King Edward was in danger of being corrupted by a surfeit of Limericks is rather startling !

There was an old man of Bombay,
 Who was smoking his pipe one hot day
 When a bird called a snipe
 Flew away with his pipe,
 And he had no more smoking that day.*

There was a short-kilted North Briton
 Who promiscuously sat on a kitten ;
 But the kitten had claws—
 The immediate cause
 Of pain to the kilted North Briton.

There was a maid-servant of Fife,
 Whose corns were the plague of her life ;
 For boots she wore Master's,
 But with Alcock's corn plasters
 She now gets on those of his wife !

There was a young dancer of Ipswich,
 Who took most astonishing skips, which
 So delighted a miss
 She said, " Give me a kiss ! "
 He replied, " On the cheek or the lips, which ? "



* The first three Limericks on this page were sent to the author by the Earl of Dartmouth and are of considerable "historical interest," being, probably, nearly a hundred years old. The interesting letter of the Earl states :—" They were familiar to me in the middle fifties in the last century. The first particularly remains in my memory, as in our nursery we had the metal figure of a fat man which we always believed to be the original man of Bombay, and as his head was loose we were firmly convinced that it had been loosened in the endeavour to retain his pipe. About the same period my father found the second in an old Scotch book, and to my annoyance made me learn it by heart and repeat it when called upon."

The third example is probably the oldest of all advertising Limericks. Mr. Alcock, who was famed for his corn-plasters, offered a prize for a verse which should advertise them, and this was the winning effort.

There was a young man of Bengal
Who went to a fancy-dress ball,
 He went, just for fun,
 Dressed up as a bun,
But a dog ate him up in the hall.

There was a young man of Bulgaria,
Who kicked his old boots down an area.
 Said Mary to Cook,
 “ Lawk a mussy—just look !
It's raining old boots—there's a pair 'ere ! ”

A prideful young lady of Boston
A two-horned dilemma was tossed on,
 As to which was the best,
 To be rich in the West
Or poor and peculiar in Boston.

There was a young seedsman of Leeds
Rashly swallowed six packets of seeds.
 In a month, silly ass,
 He was covered with grass,
And he couldn't sit down for the weeds.

There was a young lady of Bude
Who was such a queer little prude,
 She pulled down the blind
 When changing her mind,
Lest some passer-by should intrude.

There was a young lady of Riga,
 Who smiled as she rode on a tiger ;
 They returned from the ride
 With the lady inside,
 And a smile on the face of the tiger.*



* With reference to this—the most famous of all Limericks—an interesting letter appeared in "The Referee," two years ago, in which the writer expressed the opinion that it was a misquotation, "firstly because there are no tigers in Riga, and secondly because Riga doesn't rhyme with tiger. It was, of course, a young lady of Niger who sailed forth on that interesting but fatal excursion."

To which the author would reply that the first objection—if objection it be, in view of the Limerick being essentially nonsense—is balanced by the fact that there are no tigers in Africa, either; and the second circumvented by reason of the Riga version having been the correct and classic form of this Limerick ever since it became one. The author has seen a "puzzle card" containing it, dated 1873.

The same in Latin

Puella Rigensis ridebat,
 Quam tigris in tergo vehebat,
 Externa profecta
 Interna revecta,
 Risusque cum tigre manebat.

In French

Il y avait une demoiselle de Riga,
 Qui souriait en se promenant à tigre ;
 De la course en rentrant
 Voilà la dame en dedans,
 Et le sourire à la gueule du tigre.

There was a young lady of Skye
 With a shape like a capital "I."
 She said, "It's too bad,
 But then I can pad."
 Which just shows how figures can lie.

There was a young lady of Kent,
 Whose nose was exceedingly bent.
 One day, I suppose,
 She followed her nose,
 For no one knew which way she went.

There was a young lady of Keighley
 Whose principal charm in her teeth lay ;
 When they fell on her plate
 She called out, "I hate
 Mishaps of this kind, they are beatly."

There was a young lady of Whitby,
 Who had the bad luck to be bit by
 Two little brown things
 Without any wings,
 Which made her unpleasant to sit by.

There was a young man of Japan,
 Who wrote verse that never would scan.
 When they said, "But the thing
 Doesn't go with a swing,"
 He said, "Yes, but I always like to get as many
 words into the last line as I possibly can."

A Voltairean infidel fell
 Down his Louis Quatorze-y stair-well :
 He continued to fall
 Past the first floor and hall
 Till he finally landed—just outside the entrance to the
 cave where they kept the coal for the furnace.

There was an old woman of Thrace,
 Whose nose spread all over her face.
 She had very few kisses :
 The reason for this is
 There wasn't a suitable place.

A two-toothed old man of Arbroath
 Gave vent to a terrible oath.
 When one chanced to ache,
 By an awful mistake
 The dentist extracted them both !

There was a young lady of Malta,
Who strangled her aunt with a halter.
She said, "I won't bury her,
She'll do for my terrier :
She'll keep for a month if I salt her."

There was an old man of Uttoxeter,
Who hated his wife and threw socks at her
When she dared to complain
(I say it with pain)
The brute he just ups and he mocks at her.

There was an old lady of Tooting
Who wanted to learn parachuting.
Though they tried to repress her,
She jumped from the dresser,
A perfect vol-plane executing.

A persistent young fellow of Bootle
On the flute ev'ry morning would tootle.
This the neighbours annoyed,
So they had him destroyed—
His playing was perfectly brutal.

There is an old buffer of Bath,
Who never walks straight down a path.
You would probably think
He had too much to drink,
But it's only a way that he hath.

There once was a fellow of Trinity,
 Who raised X Y Z to infinity ;
 And then the old brute
 Extracted the root.
 He afterwards took to divinity.

There was a young cashier of Calais,
 Whose accounts, when reviewed, wouldn't talais ;
 Soon his chief smelt a rat,
 For he'd furnished a flat,
 And was seen ev'ry night at the balais.

There was a young dandy of Bute,
 Who sported a very loud suit.
 When they said, " It's too loud,"
 He archly said, " How'd
 I look in a suit that is mute ? "

There was an old person of Tring
 Who, when somebody asked her to sing,
 Replied, " Isn't it odd ?
 I can never tell God
Save the Weasel from Pop goes the King !"

There was a young man of Cornell,
 Who said, " I'm aware of a smell,
 But whether it's drains
 Or human remains
 I'm really unable to tell."

Said the Reverend Jabez McCotten,
 “ The waltz of the devil’s begotten ! ”
 Said Jones to Miss Bly,
 “ Never mind the old guy,
 To the pure almost everything’s rotten ! ”*

A bridge-player, thirsting for gore,
 Left his partner a corpse on the floor :
 “ De mortuis nil
 Nisi bonum,” but still—
 It is said he’d revoked once before !

A muscular Turk of Stamboul
 Tried to pull out the tail of a mule.
 The coroner’s ju—
 ry the carcass did view,
 And brought in the verdict, “ Damphoul ! ”

There was a young fellow of Perth,
 Who was born on the day of his birth.
 He was married, they say,
 On his wife’s wedding-day,
 And he died—when he quitted the earth.

There was a young lady of Diss,
 Who said, “ Now I think skating bliss.”
 This no more will she state,
 For a wheel off her skate
 Made her finish up something like this !



* This Limerick and the two ensuing examples were sent to the author of this work by Mr. Irwin Laughlin, U.S. Minister to Greece, who writes :—“ If I remember rightly the ‘ McCotten ’ Limerick appeared some twenty years ago in ‘ Life,’ of New York.”

A scraggy old spinster of Bude
Said, " Men are exceedingly rude ;
 When I bathe in the sea
 They all follow me,
To see if my bare bones protrude."

There was a young lady of Lynn,
Who was so uncommonly thin
 That when she essayed
 To drink lemonade,
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

There was an old man of Bath,
Whose wife was as thin as a lath ;
 She was cleaning the grate
 When, sad to relate,
She slipped through a crack in the hearth.

There was an old woman of Clewer,
Who was riding a bike and it threw her,
 A butcher came by,
 And said, " Missus, don't cry,"
And he fastened her on with a skewer.

For a naughty Nabob of Nigeria,
The doctor diagnosed diphtheria.
 But when isolated,
 Wine and wives confiscated,
He quickly developed hysteria.

*A Page of Varsity Limericks.**(From "The Granta")*

There was an old man of Algiers,
Who suddenly burst into tears.
When they asked him the reason
He said, "I have fleas on
Both sides of my head and my ears."

There once was a cousin of Gounod's,
Who came on as Faust with a blue nose.
Had he had, do you think,
Too much liquor to drink ?
Or was it dyspepsia ? Who knows ?

A young lady from far Samarkand
Attempted to dance in the Strand.
The policeman on duty
Said, "No, me proud beauty ;
Them foreign contortions is banned."

There was an old man who was seen
To emerge from a sausage machine.
When they asked, "Are you mangled ?"
He said, "Slightly entangled ;
Wherever on earth have I been ?"

There was a young lady of Tahiti,
 Whom the neighbours declared to be flahiti,
 For if Monday was fine,
 You would see, on her line,
 A rather diaphanous nahiti.

An eccentric old lady of Herm
 Tied bows on the tail of a worm.
 Said she, " You look festive,
 But don't become restive,
 You'll wriggle 'em off if you squirm."

There was an old girl of Genoa,
 I blush when I think what Iowa ;
 She's gone now to rest,
 Which I think's for the best,
 Otherwise I would borrow Samoa.

There was an old man of Peru,
 Who found he had nothing to do.
 So he sat on the stairs
 And counted his hairs,
 Eight thousand, four hundred and two.

There was a young lady of Durban,
 Who insisted on wearing a turban.
 When asked why she wore it,
 She said, " I adore it ;
 I'm weary of fashions suburban."

There was an old girl of Antigua
Who said to her spouse, " What a pigua ! "
Said he, " Oh, my Queen,
Is it manners you mean,
Or do you refer to my figua ? "



H.M.B.

There was a young lady of Wilts,
Who walked to the Highlands on stilts.
When they said, " Oh, how shocking !
To show so much stocking,"
She answered, " Well, how about kilts ? "

A thrifty young fellow of Shoreham
Made brown-paper trousers and woreham.
He looked nice and neat
Till he bent in the street
To pick up a pin, then he toreham.

There once was a king called Plantagenet,
Whose hat had some broom for a badge in it.
He fair Rosamund loved,
But Queen Eleanor shoved
In her spoke, so the rest—please imagine it.

There was a young native of Java,
Who frequently said he could halve a
Bold head of a neighbour
With one stroke of his sabre,
He was such an accurate carver.

A lively young lady of Cheltenham
Donned tights just to see how she felt in 'em,
But she said with a shout,
" If you don't pull me out,
I'm sure I shall jolly soon melt in 'em."

Said a gleeful young man of Torbay,
" This is rather a red-letter day,
For my great-uncle Herbert
I've poisoned with sherbet,
Because he had too much to say."

There's a certain young girl of the East
Whose extravagant ways have increased.
She's perfectly reckless,
Her latest new necklace—
Well, it must have cost ninepence, at least.

There was a young lady of Glasgow,
Whose party proved quite a fiasco,
At nine-thirty, about,
The lights all went out,
Through a lapse on the part of the Gas Co.

Said a funny old man of Montrose,
“ I ought not to wear my best clothes :
But what can I do ?
I only have two,
And these are no better than those.”

There was a young farmer of Limerick,
Who started one day to trim a rick.
The Fates gave a frown,
The rick tumbled down
And killed him—I don't know a grimmer rick.

There once was a spinster of Ealing
Endowed with such delicate feeling,
That she thought that a chair
Should not have its legs bare,
So kept her eyes fixed on the ceiling.

There was a young lady of Ealing,
 Who thought her friends very unfeeling ;
 When she had scarlet fever
 They wouldn't receive her,
 So she called on them when she was peeling.

There was a young fellow of Ealing
 Devoid of all delicate feeling.
 When he read, on the door,
 “ Don’t spit on the floor,”
 He immediately spat on the ceiling.

There was a young lady of Lancashire,
 Who once went to work as a bank cashier,
 But she scarcely knew
 $1 + 1 = 2$,
 So they had to revert to a man cashier.

There was a young fellow of Bristol
 Who shot three old maids with a pistol.
 When ’twas known what he’d done,
 He was given a gun
 By the unmarried curates of Bristol.

There was an old man of Tralee
 Who was bothered to death by a flea ;
 So he put out the light,
 Saying, “ Now he can’t bite,
 For he’ll never be able to see.”

There was an old fraud of Bucharest,
Who went to the jail and took a rest.

Said he, "I don't care
For the plainness of fare;
But I'm far to proud to brook arrest."

There was a young man from Kilbride,
Who fell down a sewer and died.

Now he had a brother
Who fell down another,
And now they're interred side by side.

Some amateur players, most brave,
A performance of "Hamlet" once gave.

Said a wag, "Now let's see
If it's Bacon or he—
That is, Shakespeare,—who's turned in his grave!"

A barber who lived in Batavia
Was known for his fearless behavia.

When a hulking baboon
Broke in his saloon,
He murmured, "I'm blowed if I'll shavia."

Infinitesimal James
Had ten unpronounceable names;
He wrote them all down,
With a mystified frown,
Then threw the whole lot in the flames.

There was an old fellow of Cosham,
 Who took out his false teeth to wash 'em.
 But his wife said, " Now, Jack,
 If you don't put them back,
 I'll jump on the d—— things and squash 'em."

An inveterate punster of London,
 When run over, thus promptly punned on
 His fate : " Oh dear ! Oh !
 This wheel is my woe !
 I am tyred ! "—then expired—all his fun done.

W. J. STONE.*

There was a young lady of Stornoway,
 Who walked till her feet had all worn away.
 Said she, " I don't mind,
 I think I shall find
 I've taken that terrible corn away."

There was a young lady of Ealing,
 Who had a peculiar feeling
 That she was a fly,
 And wanted to try
 To walk upside down on the ceiling.

A " Jock " from the town of Dundee
 Wore his kilts rather high from the knee ;
 Of course you conclude
 It was frightfully rude,
 But his mother still dresses him—See ?



* Composed at Eton College, in 1889.

There was a young yokel of Beaconsfield
Engaged to look after the deacon's field ;
 But he went to the trenches,
 And now they have wenches
To pull the weeds off the antique 'un's field.

There's a very mean man of Belsize,
Who thinks he is clever and wise.
 And, what do you think ?
 He saves gallons of ink
By simply not dötting his "i's."

There was an old man of Saxmundham,
Qui habuit ventrem rotundum.
 He borrowed five pounds
 From a master of hounds,
And refused with an oath to refund 'em.

A charming old lady of Settle,
Instead of a hat wore a kettle.
 When the people derided,
 Said she, " I've decided
To show all the neighbours my mettle."

There was an old man of Tarentum,
Who gnashed his false teeth till he bent 'em.
 When they asked him the cost
 Of what he had lost,
He said, " They weren't mine, I was lent 'em."

There was an old lady of Rye
With a terrible cast in her eye.
No person would dare
To respond to her stare,
But she never could understand why.

There was an old bore of Torbay
Who would telephone, "What did you say?"
When assured, "I said nought,"
He would cry, "So I thought;
But all doubt is now taken away."

There was a young man of the Tyne
Put his head on the South-Eastern line;
But he died of ennui,
For the 5.53
Didn't come till a quarter-past nine.

There was a young lady of Venice,
Who used hard-boiled eggs to play tennis.
When they said, "It is wrong,"
She replied, "Go along;
You don't know how prolific my hen is."

There was a young girl of West Ham,
Who hastily jumped on a tram.
When she had embarked,
The conductor remarked,
"Your fare, miss." She answered, "I am."

There was an old woman of Honiton,
Whose conduct I've written a sonnet on.

With a cold in her head
She departed to bed
For a week, with her boots and her bonnet on.

There was a brave damsels of Brighton,
Whom nothing could possibly frighten ;
She plunged in the sea,
And, laughing with glee,
Sailed away on the back of a Triton.

There was a young student of Queen's
Who was fond of explosive machines.
He once blew up a door,
But he'll do it no more,
For it chanced that the door was the Dean's.

There was a young lady of Flint,
Who had a most horrible squint.
She could scan the whole sky
With her uppermost eye,
While the other was reading small print.

There was a young man of Herne Bay,
Who was making some fireworks one day ;
But he dropped his cigar
In the gunpowder jar.
There *was* a young man of Herne Bay.

There is a young girl of Kilkenny,
 Who is worried by lovers so many
 That the saucy young elf
 Means to raffle herself,
 And the tickets are two for a penny.

There was an old fellow of Maine
 Whose legs were cut off by a train.
 When his friends said, "How sad!"
 He replied, "I am glad,
 For I've now lost my varicose vein."

There was a young maid of Tralee
 Whose knowledge of French was "Oui, oui."
 When they said, "Parlez vous?"
 She replied, "Same to you!"
 She was famed for her bright repartee.

Said a scholarly fellow of Siam :
 "I frequently read Omar Khayyám.
 His morals depress,
 But, nevertheless,
 He is nearly as clever as I am."

There was a young lady of Rio,
 Who tried to play Mendelssohn's Trio.
 Her knowledge was scanty,
 She played it Andante
 Instead of Allegro con Brio.

There was a young swell of Saltash,
Who'd been in a motoring smash.
 His vanity humbled,
 He pointed and mumbled,
 " You've sewn up my mouth—not a gash ! "

An unfortunate dumb man of Kew
Was conversing by signs that he knew,
 So exceedingly fast
 That his fingers, at last,
Entangled, and fractured a few.

There was a young man of Hong Kong,
Who played the " Dead March " on a gong :
 When they said, " What a row ! "
 He replied, " I'll allow
That it's noisy, but not that it's wrong."

(From "The Granta.")

There once was a silly old toad
Who, seeing a cart in the road,
 Said, " I think I can cross
 Just in front of that hoss."
He attempted to do so—and doed !

A giddy young fellow of Sparta
To headaches had long been a martyr.
 Till his wife, so they say,
 Took his latchkey away.
He was smart, but she was smarter.

A major, with wonderful force,
Called out in Hyde Park for a horse.

All the flowers looked round,
But not one could be found,
So he just rhododendron, of course.

There once was a party of Negroes
In the land where the cocoanut-tree grows.
Said one, "I must say,
After working all day,
I find that my sense of fatigue grows."

An authoress, living at Trim,
Possessed a remarkable whim.
She wore a large bonnet
When writing a sonnet;
A helmet when writing a hymn.

A cooper once, named Henderson,
Had such a tall and slenderson,
With such long legs
He stood on kegs
To fasten his suspenderon.

There was an old dame of Managua,
Whose hair was clawed off by a jaguar;
When he saw 'twas a wig,
He exclaimed, "Now I twig
What a false artificial old hag you are."

Yelled a Communist, " Down with the Pope
And all the crowned heads of Eu-rope !

' Equal rights ' is our creed,
What more do we need ? "
Then somebody shouted out, " Soap ! "



There was a young girl of Asturias,
Whose temper was frantic and furious.
She used to throw eggs
At her grandmother's legs—
A habit unpleasant, but curious.

There once was a corpulent carp,
Who wanted to play on the harp ;
 But, to his chagrin,
 So short was his fin,
He couldn't reach up to C sharp.

There once was a plesiosaurus
Which lived when the earth was all porous.
 But it fainted with shame
 When it first heard its name,
And departed long ages before us.

A cheerful old bear at the Zoo
Could always find something to do.
 When it bored him, you know,
 To walk to and fro,
He reversed it and walked fro and to.

At the Zoo I remarked to an emu,
“ I cannot pretend I esteem you.
 You’re a greedy old bird,
 And your walk is absurd,
But your curious feathers redeem you.”

A boastful young lady of Louth
Returned from her school to the South.
 Her mother said, “ Jane,
 There is less in your brain
Than ever came out of your mouth.”

There was a young lady of Maine,
Who was horribly sick in the train.

 Not once, but again
 And again, and again,
 And again, and again and AGAIN !

There was an old woman of Reading,
Who said, "The infection is spreading,"
 And kept on repeating,
 "Once bitten, twice Keating"—
And sprinkled it over the bedding.

There was a young man of the Clyde,
Who went to a funeral and cried.
 When asked who was dead,
 He stammered and said,
 "I don't know—I just came for the ride."

There was a young man of Westphalia,
Who yearly grew tail-ier and tail-ier,
 Till he took on the shape
 Of a Barbary Ape,
With the consequent paraphernalia.

There was an old man in a hearse,
Who murmured, "It might have been worse;
 But though the expense
 Is simply immense,
It doesn't come out of *my* purse."

THE "PUNCH" LIMERICKS OF 1863.*

(NINE EXAMPLES.)

There was an old girl of Newcastle,
 Who wore a great tassel, or tarsel,
 It made her so proud
 That folks said, quite loud,
 "Her pride wouldn't make a *small* parcel!"

There was a young lady of Hitchin,
 Who would never go down in the kitchen,
 Till her father said, "Rose,
 You're a goose to suppose
 Affection's genteel or bewitchin'."

There was a young lady of Crawley,
 Who said, "As the weather is squally,
 I'll stop at home snug
 And lie here on the rug
 And quietly read Lord Macaulay."



* On January 3, 1863, "Punch" commenced a series of original Limericks and announced that "these will be continued until every town in the United Kingdom has been immortalized."

However, this initial attempt to compile "A Complete Limerick Book" was soon considered too difficult a task, for after about forty examples had been published the editor found the pressure of Limerickal contributions too much for him, and on March 7 announced:—

There was a good-natured old chap,
 Who made rhymes for a child on his lap.
 But volunteer bards
 Sent in nonsense in yards,
 Till he cried, "I shall turn off the tap!"

There was a young lady of Denbigh,
Who wrote to her confidante, " N.B.
 I don't mean to try
 To be married, not I,
But where can the eyes of the men be ? " *

There was a young lady of Deal,
Who ate up five platefuls of veal,
 A sausage and ham,
 And some raspberry jam,
Then said, " I have made a good meal."

There was a young lady of Bute,
And she was so dreadfully cute
 That she winked at an owl,
 And remarked to that fowl,
" I know what you're thinking, you brute ! "

There was a young lady of Oakham,
Who would steal your cigars and then soak 'em
 In treacle and rum
 And then smear them with gum,
So it wasn't a pleasure to smoke 'em.



* As showing the necessity for a register of this kind it may be of interest to state that its compiler has discovered that the editor of a famous London journal, a few years ago, awarded a prize for this Limerick as the " original " effort of a plagiarizing contributor who, apart from substituting " Tenby " for " Denbigh," copied it word for word !

There was an old girl of Devizes,
Her forte was in little surprises,
 She let you come near,
 And cried, " Bless us, my dear,
Your eyes are of different sizes."

There was a young lady of Cheadle,
Who was deeply beloved by the beadle :
 But she scoffed at his prayer,
 Left her work on his chair,
And the beadle sat down on the needle.*

There was an old farmer of Towyn,
Who said to his better half, " How in
 The world can I wear
 My new hat to the Fair
If you've used it for milking the cow in ? "



* Here we have, apparently, the original version of a Limerick which in more piquant form has since become famous.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Some New Ones

There was an old man of Wisbeach,
Who slept with his clothes within reach.

“ Now, if serenaded,”
He said, when upbraided,
“ I shan’t be cold making a speech.”

MRS. CHARLES HARRIS
(whose versatile pen is also responsible for the
two specimens following).

There was a young lady of Luton,
Who never could get the left boot on.
She said, “ To explain
Is too hard for the brain :
It has never been tried the right foot on.”

A cynic of much savoir-faire,
Pursued by a horrible bear,
Said, “ I’ll argue awhile
In the feminine style,
No creature could follow me there.”

Said an envious, erudite ermine,
“ There’s one thing I cannot determine :
When a man wears my coat
He’s a person of note,
While I am a species of vermin ! ”*



* This ingenious Limerick makes fun of the fact that the fur of the ermine is used to trim the state robes of British peers.

There was an old lady who said,
 When she found a thief under the bed,
 "So near to the door,
 And so close to the floor,
 I fear you'll take cold in the head."

MRS. CHARLES HARRIS.



There once was a man with a fad,
 'Twas nothing so dreadfully bad,
 But his friends thought it silly
 When in Piccadilly
 He yodelled because he was glad.

BY THE REV. CHARLES INGE
 (who is also responsible for the two examples
 following).

There was a young man of Lugano,
Who came to tune our grand piano.
When we said, "Are you deaf ?
Don't you know G from F ?"
He cheerfully answered, "Oh, deah, no."



A traveller once, to his sorrow,
Desired to take tickets to Morro ;
But they said, " Go away,
You can't book to-day
For a journey you're taking to-morrow."

There was an old man of Geneva
 Who died of a virulent fever :
 He was sent down to Hell
 For a very long spell,
 For calling St. Peter a " beaver."*

A pretty young actress, a stammerer,
 Knew acting in theatres would damn her. A
 Producer (film genus)
 Engaged her as " Venus,"
 The rest of the story's " in camera."†

EILLE NORWOOD.‡

A motorist, out on the spree,
 Said, " Speed limits don't trouble me."
 So, during a trip
 He let the car rip—
 And a " full stop " made up R.I.P.!"

JAMES BEYNON.‡

A cyclist was nearing Kintore,
 Behind him were twenty, or more,
 When a sharpened tin-tack
 Laid him flat on his back,
 Said he, " In-come tacks I abhor."§



* The slang word for a bearded man in Great Britain is " beaver." The term originated some five years ago at Oxford University and is now widely used.

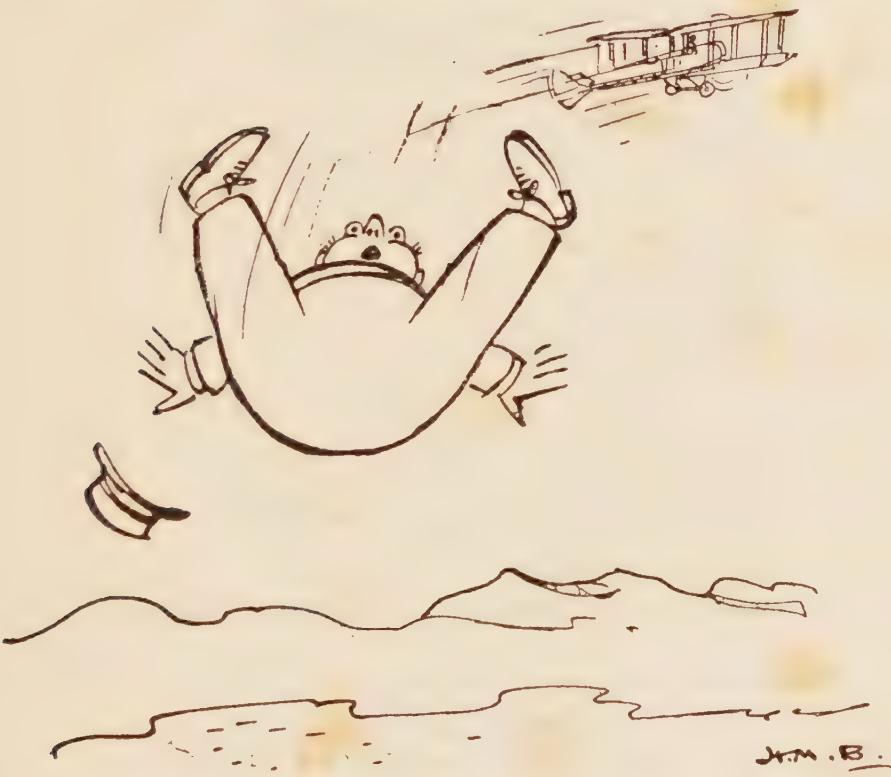
† The well-known actor and film star.

‡ Mr. Beynon was one of the most successful of the Limerick prize-winners during the " boom " of 1907-8, and won many awards, including a big one for the last line in this Limerick.

§ This is another example of a clever last line which won a prize in a newspaper Limerick competition. The sender was Mr. Coulson Kernahan.

With railways not being content,
Young Fatty by air-express went.
He fell by mistake
Into Windermere Lake,
And they thought it was raining in Kent.

H. G. DIXEY (and the following specimen).



A foolish young anarchist, Tom,
Started fooling about with a bom(b).
They got most of him up
With a teaspoon and cup,
And the rest with a hair-brush and com(b).

Said a moribund songster of Meath
 To his loved one, "Since I can't bequeath
 To you, my heart's choice,
 My falsetto voice,
 I've left you my false set o' teeth ! "

WALTER WILLIAMSON.

There once was a master at Repton
 Who quite inadvertently stepped on
 His wealthy aunt's "peke";
 She died the next week
 And left him the rug that it slept on.*

A railway official at Crewe
 Met an engine one day that he knew.
 Tho' he smiled and he bowed,
 That engine was proud,
 It cut him—it cut him in two !

A lisper whose first name was Kenneth,
 Remarked to his friend, "I say, Dennith,
 There ith only one plathe
 Where you can't hurt your fathe
 When you fall in the street, and that's Venithe!"

To compose a sonata to-day,
 Don't proceed in the old-fashioned way :
 Take your seat *on* the keys,
 Bump about as you please.
 "Oh, how modern !" the critics will say.

F. E. GLADSTONE.



* From the July issue of that bright school magazine "The Haileyburian."

A DENTAL QUARTETTE

A miserly fellow of Bray
 To his dentist declared, "I shan't pay,
 For I paid when you drew one,
 Now you've charged for a new one,
 And so get a 'pull' either way."

There was a young dentist of Louth,
 Who had to retire further south,
 For, if patients had mumps,
 He'd remove all their stumps,
 Lest they should feel "down in the mouth."

An improvident person named Hornett
 Extracted his front tooth to pawn it,
 But when he was told
 It was *not* filled with gold,
 He felt rather sorry he'd drawn it.

Our dentist at length got the hump
 With a patient who'd fidget and jump;
 Said he, "I can't stick it,
 Your conduct's not cricket,
 Play the game, or I'll just draw the stump!"

V. A. GOODMAN.*



* Writes Mr. Goodman:—"These are pasted in your Limerick Book in our waiting room." From which source the editor is gratified to make such excellent extractions!

An eccentric old person of Slough,
 Who took all his meals with a cow,
 Always said, " It's uncanny,
 She's so like Aunt Fanny,"
 But he never would indicate how.

GEORGE ROBEY.

A sign-writer, living at Kettering,
 Was bent his condition on bettering ;
 His wish was fulfilled,
 For though first unskilled
 He grew most proficient in lettering.

C. L. BRADFIELD.

There was a young lady of Prague,
 Who was both absent-minded and vague,
 Two faults she ascribed
 To the fact she imbibed,
 And her early attacks of the ague.

ATHENE SEYLER.*

A charming young lady named Nelly
 Once danced herself almost to jelly ;
 The doctors declared
 That her life might be spared
 If she stayed for a week at Pwllheli.

CHARLES COBORN.†



* The well-known actress.

† The veteran singer of "The Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" and "Two Lovely Black Eyes" has composed this Limerick as a skit on Welsh pronunciation and spelling.

A Conservative, out in his motor,
Ran over a Radical voter.

“Thank goodness,” he cried,
“He was on the wrong side,
So I don’t blame myself one iota.”

A. W. WEBSTER.

A maiden at college, named Breeze,
Weighed down by B.A.’s and M.D.’s,
Collapsed from the strain.
Said her doctor, “ ’Tis plain
You are killing yourself—by degrees ! ”

MRS. WARREN.

There was an old man of Madrid,*
Who wanted to slide, so he slid.
Said he, “ This is nice,
But I fear that the ice
Is so thin, it will break.” And it DID.

There was an old man of Samaria,
Who took a sun bath in the area.
Said the maid to the cook,
“ Oh, do come and look,
I never saw anyone hairier.”



* Yes, of course, I know the traditional Limerick about the old man of Madrid, who went to an auction to bid, but though, perhaps, not quite down to the Rabelaisian standard of excellence, it is just a leetle out of place in a respectable collection such as this.

A "SPOONERISM" LIMERICK.

This person hates sadly-boiled rats
 In the drain as quite messy, so that's
 A sign that I am
 Not to dust him a tram;
 Besides, he has spurious cats !*

PROFESSOR IRVINE MASSON
 (Durham University.)

Translation.

This person rates badly-soiled hats
 In the main as quite dressy, so that's
 A sign that I am
 Not to trust him a d——;
 Besides, he has curious spats!

There was a young man of the veldt,
 Who wished in the town he had dwelt,
 For to make cash, he found
 He must needs dig the ground,
 And his figure was rather too svelte.

There's a place that's called Westcliff-on-Sea,
 A paradox, quite, seems to me,
 For its cliffs have "gone West,"
 And as for the rest,
 There is mud where the sea ought to be.

HERBERT C. SERGEANT.



* In this whimsical example Professor Masson has surely invented a new type of Limerick. In sending it to L. R. he explains that it is based upon the business maxim: "A man who wears a seedy hat inspires no confidence."

A pedlar of Czechoslovakia
 Cried, "How shall I carry my pack here?
 The rocks are so steep
 And the rivers so deep,
 That really there isn't a track here!"

FLORENCE A. VICARS.



John B.
 There once was a lad of Bagdad,
 An inquisitive sort of a lad,
 Who said, "I will see
 If a sting has a bee."
 And he very soon found that it had!

There was a young angler of Worthing,
 Who dug up ten worms and a fur thing.
 He said, "How I wish
 Eleven fine fish
 Would snap up these things I'm unearthing."

There was a young lady of Ealing,
 Who sang with such exquisite feeling,
 She would drown all the flies
 With the tears from her eyes
 When her top notes reached up to the ceiling.

ALFRED SMYTHE.

There was a smart widow of Leeds,
 Who clothed herself always in weeds ;
 When she wished a new jacket,
 She took out a packet,
 And sowed herself over with seeds.

ALFRED SMYTHE.

There was a young chemist of Sheffield,
 Who claimed that his ointment the deaf healed.
 A man a box took
 To cure his deaf cook,
 And very much better the chef feeled !*

There was an old lady of Devon,
 Who, finding she reached ninety-seven,
 Being thoughtful and sharp,
 Began learning the harp,
 To be ready when called up to Heaven.

JULIAN GARDINER.



* I understand that this Limerick was perpetrated in answer to a challenge which claimed that it was impossible to find a rhyme to Sheffield. It is regrettable that the name of the audacious bard has not been discovered, for his pluck deserves recognition.

An office boy, working in Wycombe,
Said, "Bother the stamps, I can't stick 'em."

Then the irate chief clerk
Was heard to remark,
" You've a tongue—why on earth don't you lick 'em ? "

A. A. SAUNDERS.

There once was an eminent tortle*
Who thought his inside was immortal,
But he went on a trip
On a Southern Line ship
And was shockingly sick through a port 'ole.

NINA BALFOUR.

Twin houris who dwelt by the Bosphorus
Had eyes which shone brighter than phosphorus.
The sultan cried, " Troth !
I will marry you both."
They said, " Oh dear, no, you must toss for us."

Said a young bridge-player of Liscard,
On making a curious discard,
To his partner's blank face,
As he threw down the ace,
" That's nothing, I often waste this card."

" I must leave here," sighed Lady de Vere,
" For these damp airs don't suit me, I fear ! "
Cried her friend, " Goodness me !
If they never agree
With your system, why eat pears, my dear ? "

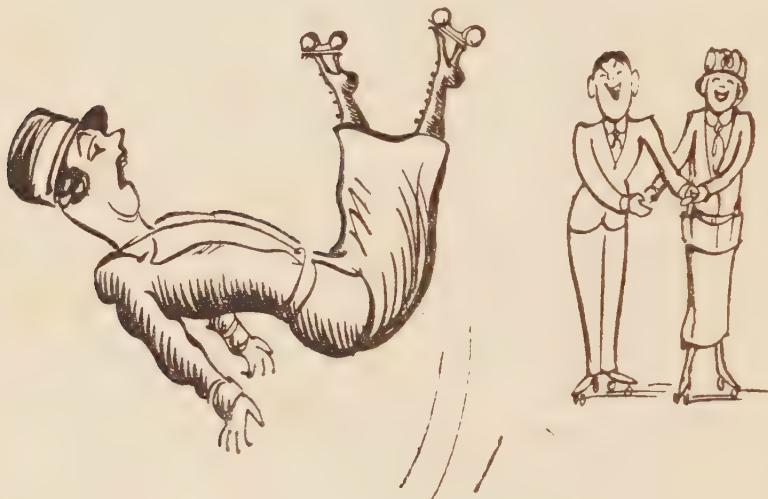
A. E. PAGE.



* This creature is a cross between a tortoise and a turtle !

There was a young lady named Kate,
 Who was learning on rollers to skate,
 And her friends, for a game,
 Quickly gave her the name
 Of "Niag'ra"—her "falls" were so "great."

R. F. WELLS.



A Frenchman went up to St. John's,
 Whose learning delighted the dons,
 But though clever at Greek,
 His batting was weak,
 So he never got into the onze.

M. STRICKLAND.

Said a zealous young student named Coles,
 " As we always term Poland folk ' Poles,'
 I'm more than inclined,
 With my logical mind,
 To designate Holland's sons ' Holes.' "

F. C. WILSON.

There was a young Girton B.A.
 Who married a Don—so they say.

A year or so later
 He became a proud pater,
 And she got a double M.A. (MAMA).

T. H. BRYANT.

A Chicago beef-packer named Young,
 One day, when his nerves were unstrung,
 Pushed his wife's ma—unseen—
 In the chopping machine,
 Then canned her and labelled her " Tongue."

Jim Peters, who taught Esperanto,
 Had a sister Sal, acting in Panto;
 But away the minx ran
 With the Co.'s comic man—
 And Jim never knew where S. P. ran to.

DR. A. WARSHAW.

There once was a ruler of Ai,
 Who lamented, " No one will obey I !
 I would give up my throne
 If they'd leave me alone—
 But the Treasury won't even pay I ! "

E. GREEK STONEMAN.*



* Mr. Stoneman's verse, and a few others in this collection, are the only Limericks based on Biblical place-names that the editor has encountered. They suggest a fruitful field for Limerick cultivation.

There was a young lady of Shiloh,
 Who potted her charms in a silo,
 When long ages had past
 She was dug up, at last ;
 And now she's a Venus de Milo.

There was a young student named Gregory,
 Whose ignorance reduced him to beggary,
 He referred in debates
 To the tub of Socrates,
 But considered the tale an *allegory*.

There was a young lady of Filey,
 Who was said to be wondrous wily,
 When they asked her her age,
 She turned down a page
 Numbered 20 and closed the book shyly.

There was an old man named McGuire
 Lost his footing and fell in the mire.
 Said a bland passer-by,
 “Cheer up, ne'er say die ! ”
 “But I must,” he replied, “I'm a dyer ! ”

There was a bad schoolboy who baited
 A master whose methods he hated,
 Till at length, so 'tis said,
 Things came to a “head,”
 Who the “seat” of the trouble located.

R. NORMAN.

A Benedict youth known as Rutters
Led his bride to the altar, all flutters.

“ Is there any just cause
Or impediment ? ”—(pause)—
“ I’m all right, but dear Stephanie stutters.”

EDWARD MINSHALL.

To a person arriving in Heaven
Said St. Peter, “ We dine sharp at seven,
Then breakfast’s at eight—
Never mind if you’re late,
And there’s biscuits and milk at eleven.”

JULIAN S. HUXLEY.*

An important young man of Quebec
Had to welcome the Duchess of Teck.
So he bought for a dollar
A very high collar
To save himself washing his neck.

J. H. PITTMAN.

There was a young fellow of Boston,
Whose right lung, alas ! was a lost ‘un,
But in Denver’s pure air
He now has a pair,
That’s the difference ’tween Denver and Boston.

There was a young doctor, named Wise,
Who’d prevaricate up to the skies.
“ It’s healthy,” he said,
“ To catch cold in the head,”
Which, of course, was a—tishoo of lies.



* Professor Huxley, the well-known zoologist, of King’s College, London.

She was peeved and called him "Mr."
 Not because he went and kr.,
 But because, just before,
 As she opened the door,
 This same Mr. kr. sr.



There was an old lady of Wales
 Who lived upon whisky and snails ;
 On growing a shell,
 She exclaimed, " It is well,
 It will save me in bonnets and veils."

CAPTAIN JOHN N. MORE.

Digwyddodd tro blin un bore dydd Llun
 Pan gododd John Willie yn hanner dihun :
 Wrth neidio i'w lodrau
 Cymysgodd y coesau
 Fel na wyddai'r athro pa sut oedd ei drin.*

L. W. MORGAN.

A VENETIAN TRIPTYCH.

There was a young lady of Venice
 Who went out in shorts to play tennis ;
 Her mother said, " Jane,
 If you do that again,
 I doubt if you'll marry young Dennis."

C'était une jeune dame de Venise
 Qui sortit habillée en . . . cérise ;
 " Mais, mon pauvre enfant,"
 S'écria sa maman,
 " On ne va pas comme ça à l'église ! "

Ein Mädel im schönen Venedig
 Ging aus aller Kleidung fast ledig ;
 Doch als die Mama
 Das entsetzliche sah,
 Da schrie sie : " Der Herr sei uns gnädig ! "

J. W.



* Limericks in Welsh suggest terrific possibilities. Who will be the first hero to venture an example on the picturesque Anglesey market town of Llanfairpwllgwyngyll? Thus it is considerably inscribed in the gazetteers. Actually its full name is "Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlltysilio-gogogoch"! The editor, however, would not care to have on his conscience the responsibility of having invited a Limerick contribution on this!

Came a cook to a Princess of Aragon,
 Who behaved at the first like a paragon,
 Till she took to the drink
 And was found in the sink,
 Surrounded by bottles of Taragon.

(From "Punch," 1926.)

A foolish old party of Attica
 Drank port for a bout of sciatica ;
 'Twas his doctor who said,
 " You will shortly be dead—
 I'm sorry I can't be emphatica ! "

DR. C. J. THOMAS.*

A CHRISTMAS GREETING †

I wish you good luck and good cheer,
 For Christmas, and also New Year ;
 May Dame Fortune attend you
 And always befriend you,
 And Mis(s) Fortune never come near.

L. R.



* This popular senior medical officer to the L.C.C., in forwarding his Limerick, writes, apropos the first edition of the book : " Your Limerick Book is quite the best thing I saw this Christmastide. I was suffering from an acute attack of sciatica and I vow that getting hold of your book was the means of curing it. During the attack, and stimulated by your example, I perpetrated the Limerick enclosed."

The Editor has been pleased to receive more than a dozen other letters, from British and American correspondents, telling of the "curative" effects of the book. In one case a lady wrote that a violent attack of toothache had been driven away by it, while another lady declared that her aged and bed-ridden father, as a result of reading it, had become cheerful for the first time for years ! The Editor feels sure that the many clever and helpful people, without whose contributions this book would have been impossible, will be gratified by these tributes.

† It having been pointed out to the Editor that there does not appear to be a single Limerick in existence which could be used for Christmas greetings, he hastens to rectify this remarkable omission.

L'Envoi

My pen I can, herewith, discard.
If you study my counsel quite hard,
 You may, I foresee,
 A Lim'rick bard be,
And have no more Limericks barred.

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(Arranged according to the "Key" Word in each case.)

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